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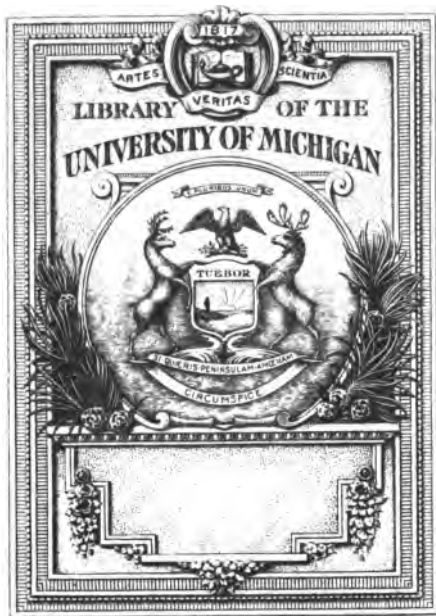
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POEMS









POEMEN

JOHANNA ANTONIETTA

EDITED

PROFESSOR KARL SCHUBERT

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

TRANSLATED

BY MARY J. S. GIBSON

FROM THE SWEDISH



BOSTON

ROBERTS BROTHERS

1895



*Voigt, Frau Johanna (Ambrosius)*

# P O E M S

BY

JOHANNA AMBROSIUS

Edited by

PROFESSOR KARL SCHRATTENTHAL

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

Translated

By MARY J. SAFFORD

FROM THE TWENTY-SIXTH EDITION



BOSTON

ROBERTS BROTHERS

1896

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**Dedicated**  
TO  
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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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**I**N making this English version of the poems of JOHANNA AMBROSIUS, the translator's aim has been to reproduce the work of the author as faithfully as the transfer from one language to another would permit, retaining not only the thought, but the alternations of rhyme, the number of syllables in each line, etc. If a smoother flow of the English verse would sometimes have resulted from a less accurate rendering, it is believed that the readers of this volume will prefer the closer following of the writings of this remarkable woman. Instances of exceptions to this rule are the poems, "The Blind Woman and the Deaf Mute," and "Our Weakness;" where, more closely to follow the *thought* of the poetess, — which has invariably been the *first* consideration, — the lines are all ten syllables in length, while in the original they are alternately ten and eleven.

MARY J. SAFFORD.



TO

*The Empress of Germany,*

THE PRINCESS WHO IN HER PALACE HEARD AND HELD  
A HELPING HAND TO HER SISTER-WOMAN,  
THE PEASANT IN HER HUT,

THE AMERICAN EDITION OF THE POEMS OF  
JOHANNA AMBROSIUS IS DEDICATED.





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The Home  
of  
Johanna  
Ambrosius.



## INTRODUCTION

**I**N my review of *German Women in Modern Literature*, I have endeavored to express my opinion that, in view of our noble poets and literary productions of many German women of the present time, this may be termed a brilliant epoch of feminine literature. I should be reluctant to have this statement misunderstood. It by no means refers to the fact, in many respects a lamentable one, that it is women who, especially in the domain of fiction, are displaying an activity which scarcely permits even the most zealous observer to make any adequate record; nor to the circumstance that women's letters predominate in the family papers. I merely wish to assert that, among the large number of the literary women of the last decades of this century, there are many who, by the value of their production, the peculiarity of their intellectual creations, demand the recognition not only of the great reading public, but also of the serious worshipper of art, as well as the historian of literature who judges with keen objectivity. So the

The House  
of  
Jehanna  
Barbersius.

## INTRODUCTION.

---

**I**N my volume, "German Women in Modern Lyric Poetry," I have already ventured to express the opinion that, in view of the remarkable poetic and literary productions of many German women of the present time, this might be termed a brilliant epoch of feminine literature. I should be reluctant to have this statement misunderstood. It by no means refers to the fact, in many respects a lamentable one, that it is women who, especially in the domain of fiction, are displaying an activity which scarcely permits even the most zealous observer to make an adequate record; nor to the circumstance that women authors predominate in the family papers. I merely wish to assert that, among the large number of the literary women of the last decades of this century, there are many who, by the value of their poetic work, the peculiarity of their intellectual creations, demand the recognition not only of the great reading public, but also of the serious worshipper of art, as well as the historian of literature who judges with keen objectivity. So the

statement is not caused by the mass of literary productions, nor by the great number of women who are striving for the laurels of poetry, but by the actual importance of the productions themselves, which ought not to be overlooked in any history of letters, and which show us the feminine literature of our own time in its full florescence.

That many critics and historians of literature hold a different opinion, we can daily convince ourselves.

I seek and find the basis of such phenomena, not in the fact that the critic in question reaches adverse opinions in consequence of his view or conviction of woman's capacity in the domain of intellect, nor even that the fear of a competition, which may indeed arouse anxiety, in some degree incites him to the warfare against women's writings, — no! the former would be very narrow-minded, the latter unlovely and ignoble. I find the source of these phenomena solely in the fact that these critics have not properly surveyed the undeniably over-large field of feminine literature. Were this done, many verdicts would become more lenient.

I willingly admit, nay, I have even frequently said, that during the examination of the lyric poetry of the women of our day, in the presence of the countless volumes in which equally numberless women perpetuate — that is, seek to perpetuate — their well or ill scanned joys and woes, one may with justice despairingly exclaim: "The spirit of God did not hover over

these waters !” But even the critic whose demands are the most rigid and exacting cannot help readily admitting — that is, if he has surveyed the field — that the lyrical productions of the recently deceased Betty Paoli, of Countess Wickenburg-Almásy, also dead, as well as of the poetesses Ada Christen, Carmen Sylva, Helene von Engelhardt, Ilse Frapan, Günther von Freiberg, Amara George, Amélie Godin, M. E. delle Grazie, M. Hellmuth, Angelika von Hörmann, Ricarda Huch, M. Janitschek, Agnes Kayser-Langerhauss, Isolde Kurz, M. von Najmájer, Alberta von Puttkammer, Emil Roland, Frida Schanz, and Countess S. Waldburg, at least should not be overlooked in the history of the poetry of the present day.

The most patient and unprejudiced reader will cheerfully admit that if, according to Berthold Auerbach’s prescription, we should discharge canister shot into a million pianos to check the wretched piano epidemic, we might with full reason first stuff these jingling boxes with women’s novels ; but the objective critic or historian of literature will with equal readiness acknowledge that the epic works of many German women shine as ornaments in the wreath twined by the narrative poetry of the present day. The names of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, M. E. delle Grazie, Ada Christen, Ida Boy-Ed, Marie von Haustein, E. von Dincklage, Wilhelmine von Hillern, Ossip Schubin, E. Marriot, Johanna Niemann, Louise von François,

B. von Suttner, and others cannot be mentioned with the customary shrug of the shoulders ; for what they have accomplished in the domain of epic fiction will not be merely catalogued, but will have its poetic merits duly set forth. Nay, when we judge impartially, we reach the conviction that, especially in Austria, women have already contended for literary precedence with men. Of the masculine leaders Robert Hamerling<sup>1</sup> is already dead, and a woman, Marie Eugénie delle Grazie, has taken his place. Her magnificent epic, "Robespierre," has afforded us the consolation that the place where Hamerling stood is not deserted, but occupied by a sister of equal birthright in Apollo, whose name must be mentioned in the history of German poetry with the foremost. Marie Eugénie delle Grazie is at present the greatest poet of Austria, and Marie von Ebner Eschenbach the best novelist.

I have apparently wandered somewhat widely from my purpose of passing to the creative work of a woman of the people whose poetic productions I am giving to the public in this book ; but I cannot refrain from pointing out that, in the present development of women's literature, not only these representatives of the gentler sex who have had the blessing of a higher education are entering the arena of intellect, but that, even in the lower ranks of the people, poetic voices

<sup>1</sup> Best known in America by his romance of Greek life, "Aspasia." — TR.



are being raised which it would be a sin to leave unheard. In the first line stood the poetess of nature, Katherina Koch, of Ortenburg in Lower Bavaria, now dead. I published several years ago a portion of her beautiful, thoughtful, and national poetry, and am now giving to the reading world the whole literary legacy of this woman of the people, who for sixteen years performed the duties of a maidservant, and yet was a genuine poetess. I will devote the net profits to the erection of a simple monument in her home, Ortenburg in Lower Bavaria, or use it to found a Katharine Koch Institute.

With the present book, "Poems by Johanna Ambrosius," I am permitted to introduce to literature a woman who, born the daughter of a poor artisan, gave her hand in wedlock to a peasant, and, in spite of the hard labor required in the house and fields, can always find an hour to receive the visit of the Muse who has imprinted the kiss of consecration on her brow. I now commit the book anew to the public, in the joyous belief that others will be as much uplifted by this voice from the people as I was when I examined the poems. My task is twofold. First, I would fain, as has already been mentioned, win for the work of this poetess a little nook in the history of the poetry of our own times, — poetesses of the people and of nature are rare; secondly, the purpose of this volume is to procure for the invalid, needy woman a

net profit which will somewhat lighten the burdens of her peasant life and, it is to be hoped, from the success thus far obtained, secure a future competence.

When, just before the Christmas holidays of the year 1894, I published the first edition, I was so generously supported that, ere they were over, I could send the poetess a considerable sum. A warm "May God reward you!" to all who answered with a subscription the appeal I published in the newspapers! Yet I must confess that I had not hoped for so rapid a sale of the books. Within a few days I had not a single copy at my disposal. Then, especially after the publication of the work was transferred to Königsberg, Prussia, edition followed edition in the most rapid succession, until now, eighteen months after the appearance of the first, the *twenty-sixth* is called for. This is certainly a rare and unexpected success; probably scarcely ever before has a poetess received so swift a recognition and such universal approbation as Johanna Ambrosius. She has been unanimously welcomed by all the critics, and many foreign periodicals — English, American, French, Dutch, and Italian — have lauded her in long articles. This successful run caused a discussion of the volume by Heinrich Hart in No. 291 of the "Täglichen Rundschau," issued December 13, 1894, from which I am permitted to make an extract. The popular poet says: —

"It is a heartfelt pleasure to announce in the

'Täglichen Rundschau,' the paper whose readers will especially appreciate what causes me such joyful emotion, a little volume which has just appeared : 'Johanna Ambrosius, a German Poetess of the People.' I began to read the booklet somewhat distrustfully, for I have had many an untoward experience with persons who boastfully assumed the title of Poet of the People ; but I needed only to glance at a few pages ere deep sympathy mastered me, and I read the book with eager interest to the end. It is one of the most beautiful evidences of the wealth of soul, intellectual yearning, ideal aspiration, which are hidden in our nation, even in the classes where the *blasé* expect only psychical dulness and mental inertia ; but also a testimonial of the various ways in which stunted development threatens this aspiration, because it is and must remain so completely in obscurity. The young Italian poetess, Ada Negri, who, amid oppressive poverty and seclusion from the world, has developed a marvellous poetic talent, is already a lauded personality in German literary circles ; but who among us has ever heard of the German poetess Johanna Voigt, born Ambrosius, who, amid still more difficult circumstances than the Italian's, discovered and revealed her talent ? As an individual, Ada Negri is probably a more marked character than her German sister, who lacks the vigorous self-consciousness, the bold social views of the Italian ; but as a poetess Johanna

Ambrosius need scarcely shun comparison with Negri : whatever advantage the latter has in form, the German possesses in genuineness of feeling. Without any external encouragement, burdened by severe manual daily labor, Johanna Ambrosius was obliged to make herself what she has become ; now, for the first time, she has found in Karl Schrattenthal a friend who has compiled and published the poems of the woman bowed by toil and illness.

“ But the poetess still maintains her mental health, and song after song still flows forth, even now. Only a small portion are contained in the Schrattenthal collection ; but these few will suffice to awaken admiration for a woman who, thus burdened, thus secluded from the world, not only so fully expanded her heart and soul, but even developed a rare delicacy of feeling for rhythm and expression.

“ Very infrequently does she regard poverty as something unendurable ; she always struggles on to renunciation and submission, and often extols sorrow, as did Saint Francis of Assisi ; for instance, in the profoundly thoughtful poem of ‘ Bridegroom Pain and Sister Sorrow.’<sup>1</sup> Therefore even her own need did not harden her against the poverty which oppressed the people around her, but rather deepened her compassion. Like those of Negri, many of the poems of Ambrosius also have a socialistic sympathy, but they

<sup>1</sup> The poem in this volume bears the title “ My Friend.” —Tr.

wholly lack the Italian's revolutionary, daring spirit; the German laments, but she neither assails nor defies.

“Genuine poesy also emanates from the love poems and songs of home, which reveal an ardent appreciation of nature, coupled with a kindly German temperament. It is to be hoped that many will purchase the little work of this ‘fettered yet inwardly free soul.’”

I should like to thank Herr Heinrich Hart here most heartily, but he would reject it with the words, “I have done my duty as a conscientious critic.”

I derived special pleasure from the numerous letters of recognition that reached the authoress in the little East-Prussian village, and which she permitted me to read. They afford many proofs of a favorable though not professional criticism, and I will allow myself — the authoress ought not to take offence — to publish a poetic greeting which is especially graceful.

#### TO JOHANNA VOIGT-AMBROSIUS.

Far off upon the barren moors,  
 There blooms a flow'ret fair;  
 Its fragrance sweet, like springtide glow,  
 All lands of earth may share.

Within the deepest forest shades  
 Echoed a seraph's tone,  
 And on the angel wings of grief  
 To God himself hath flown.

From out of the World-Spirit's cup  
A shining drop swift sank,  
Which, lo ! thy beauty-thirsting lips,  
O German Sappho, drank !

In heartfelt reverence and sincere admiration,

A GERMAN SISTER IN ENGLAND.

I will remark, by way of introduction, that for the purpose of procuring a tolerably clear view of the character and circumstances of the peasant poetess, I applied to all her relatives or acquaintances who presumably could afford me many interesting particulars. I was not disappointed in my expectation ; assistance was most kindly rendered, and I take this opportunity of thanking them for their willingness and labor. If I do not use the most attractive and peculiar contributions to the modest picture I wish to sketch, — the letters which the poetess wrote to me, — the command of discretion must plead my apology.

Johanna Ambrosius (Frau Johanna Voigt, born Ambrosius) was born on the 3rd of August, 1854, at Lengwethen, a village in the district of Ragnit in East Prussia, as the second child of a poor artisan. Of course she was permitted to attend only the little village school, and that merely until she was eleven years old ; from that time, for a long period, she was acquainted with nothing except hard work.

Johanna remained at home with her elder sister

Martha ; and as her mother was ill for years, the young girls, scarcely beyond childhood, were obliged to perform every kind of labor, even the hardest and most menial. So they were forced to struggle through that year of destitution, 1867, in which their parents both succumbed to illness.

The father read a great deal, and allowed the children to have the "Gartenlaube ;" and the young girls with joyful hearts sacrificed everything in order to be able to obtain food for their minds. When they had spun till their fingers were bleeding, and had hung the allotted number of skeins on the nail, they stretched out their hands for their beloved paper.

At twenty Johanna married a peasant. So she lived in a most wretched hut, and had no companions except among the people.

Two children — Marie, now nineteen, and Erich, sixteen years old — were given to her and increased her cares. By means of a small legacy the husband and wife found it possible to buy a little house and a piece of land in Gross-Wersmeninken. But the young wife's hopes were not realized. Physical and mental sufferings assailed her. Grief forced a passage, and Johanna became a poetess. In the autumn of the year 1884 her first poem was written. Her sister Martha became the confidante of this secret, and sent Frau Anny Wothe, the editor of the periodical "Von Haus zu Haus," several poems which were accepted and pub-

lished. Yet though several other papers also accepted the poetical productions of the ardent soul forced into such narrow circumstances, unfortunately no one thought of rendering the poor woman's beautiful gift its just due and making her poems known in larger circles; and so Johanna remained obscure. And how gladly she would have sent the children of her brain out into the world, not for the sake of idle fame, but to be able to do something for her beloved children!

Then I made the attempt, and it succeeded. But it was quite time; for the poetess is supporting her son away from home, and is ill and feeble. At New Year's in 1890, influenza brought her to a sick-bed, inflammation of the lungs set in, and when, without medical aid, she was again able to rise, she knew that her health was forever shattered. Her body is feeble, and it is only with pain and suffering that she is able to fulfil her duties as a much harassed country woman. And yet new poems are still written! What a powerful imagination must exert its sovereignty! Yet the poetess has never seen mountain, lake, or palace,—in short, has never beheld any other magnificence than the beauty of her own home. But she has gazed at this little with a poet's eyes. I think I may feel sure every unprejudiced reader will draw from what is offered that this is a noteworthy, and in part a strongly poetic talent. But it is particularly surprising that, under circumstances so unfavorable, the woman could



soar to such an intellectual height. She herself, of course, considers it all perfectly natural and simple. "Only I cannot write to order," she says naïvely enough, in one of her letters; "and when I am not impelled to write poetry, the Muse bites my finger."

I myself, while reading the poems sent me, could not repress my surprise; yet the poor woman's letters informed me that before her illness she regularly swung the flail on the threshing-floor; nay, I learned at the same time that, in her husband's absence, she attended to house, field, and stable, and three years ago mowed the hay with the scythe and bound the sheaves in the harvest season! Now her weak back no longer permits such heavy labor. Her only leisure time for writing is on Sunday, and when does she compose? In the fields, in the garden, while cooking, in the stable. And she is aided by a remarkable memory. She can repeat all her poems, perhaps five hundred, by heart.

Her reading from her thirteenth to her twentieth year, as has already been mentioned, was the "Gartenlaube" and a few books supplied by her sister Martha; then for twelve years she remained without any mental stimulus, neither newspapers nor books, Bible nor hymnbook. During recent years she first read the poetry of Karl Stieler and Fritz Reuter.

When I decided to publish a selection from the

poems of this gifted woman, it was of course to the "Gartenlaube" I applied. Herr Ad. Kroner was kind enough to take a poem, "Let her Sleep." To this circumstance I owed a letter from a lady living in Pillkallen, East Prussia, which I will insert here because it makes us acquainted with the circumstances of the poetess. It is dated October 9, 1894, and runs as follows:—

"Through one of the last numbers of the 'Gartenlaube' you directed my attention to the talented poetess, Frau Ambrosius-Voigt, and my interest was awakened. As the place of residence you named is only about three miles from my native city, I sought her out, and shall fulfil her wishes if I describe how and where I found her.

"Not far from a larger church-village, Lasdehnen, on a broad, monotonous plain, stretches a dark, solemn fir wood, now and then varied by the lighter green of the deciduous trees. Here is solitude, the stern solitude of the forest, of which the poetess writes in her verse and has the power to interpret. Here, even in our usually monotonous East Prussia, a poetic spirit can rejoice and find sustenance for its glowing emotions. I was letting my eyes wander rapturously over the gloomy tops of the trees, then I suddenly saw the sun illumine the edge of the woods, and a short distance before me appeared the modest little houses of a

village ; it must be Gross-Wersmeninken. People were at work near the road digging their potatoes, who answered my questions whether this was the village I supposed it to be, and where Frau Voigt lived. I was really near the end of my drive, and, after a short time, I turned into the village street, scanning every farmhouse which might perhaps be worthy of sheltering the mind of a poetess.

“One plain little house, almost exactly like its neighbor, succeeded another ; but one was different, wholly different, almost more modest than the rest, the windows small, the roof low, the plain gray wooden walls scarcely visible, for they were covered to the roof with vines which made the tiny windows seem still smaller. In front of the house was a little garden where a few autumn flowers, in spite of the lateness of the season, still maintained their blooming existence. She must live here ! Yet, notwithstanding this conviction, I first stopped at the tavern, and learned from its landlady, also a Frau Voigt, that I had made no mistake. I traversed the short distance on foot, and reached the vine-covered dwelling. A little watchdog barked, and a thin, sickly, poorly clad woman, stooping in her walk, crossed the threshold to meet me. It was Johanna Ambrosius-Voigt. After learning my desire, she ushered me into the house. I passed through a low door into a room more than plain ; it lacked every ornament and every comfort, only it was neat, but

nothing would have suggested the asylum of a poetess. On the table, scoured till white, stood a well-filled inkstand, and beside it lay a penholder which one saw was fit for use and was used. The latter fact could not fail to be noticed by any one who knows how difficult it is to obtain available writing-materials among people of her class in our neighborhood.

“Fran Voigt herself was very poorly clad, as simply as the poorest laborer’s wife in our region. A plain skirt, a jacket, and a dark kerchief tied over her head certainly did not aid in leading one to expect more from her than from others similar in appearance. But I had talked only a few minutes with this singular woman, and now and then during our conversation had seen her eyes sparkle, ere I knew in whose presence I stood.

“I spent nearly two hours with her, and could scarcely tear myself away from our stimulating conversation. When we parted we shook hands as if we had shared joy and sorrow for years. She told me many things about her misunderstood existence, for the whole circle of her neighborhood is ill-suited to share her interests and tastes. So she stands alone and uncomprehended, with her ardent, sensitive heart, and moreover in poverty and need. She loves her two children tenderly.”

As I have already mentioned, I shall renounce the best means of presenting a correct picture of the

poetess's character, — that is, the publication of the letters she has written to me. I do so with a heavy heart, but from well-considered reasons, — with a heavy heart, because these letters produce an effect almost more immediate than the poems, and because they are a little jewel casket of charming descriptions and original thoughts. But I do not wish to deprive my newly won friend of unrestricted freedom in correspondence ; and this would inevitably occur if she wrote every letter with the disturbing thought that it might be published.

So for the description of her characteristics I will confine myself to the contributions made by her relatives and friends. First, there is a letter from her beloved sister Martha, which I quote here because it, too, proceeds from the pen of an artisan's daughter, who, like Johanna, enjoyed only the instruction of the village school. In reply to my request for a few data of her sister's life, she wrote September 3rd, 1894, among other things, the following : —

“Yes, describe her nature ! Now more than ever a simile would suit Johanna ! Pegasus dying in harness ! As a beautiful and clever child she was beloved by all who knew her, an embodied sunbeam. The influences exerted by her education, warping, and domestic circumstances to make her what she has become, Johanna herself has perhaps already indicated. It would be going too far, were I to describe

everything, — her sunny, care-free early childhood, how her active mind was left to itself, while her delicate, nay, fragile body was burdened with the hardest, most menial tasks in the field and stable. At that time she still looked with untroubled, trusting eyes into the world, which in youth seems so beautiful; yet we both felt how unlike we were to our companions in the village. Our souls were beginning to retire into themselves. Sparks were commencing to flash from Johanna's little brain; the longing for liberty, light, Life, resistlessly forced a pathway. Johanna had outgrown the obedience required by her parents, but crushing to body and soul; she often manifested her own will, and half in pursuit of her own inclinations, half yielding to the pressure of circumstances, she entered the service of strangers. Perhaps she hoped to find in the outside world what her soul missed. Oh, disappointment! So she returned home, and, to gain liberty as she thought, gave her hand to a plain but kind and honest peasant, who had been loyally and ardently attached to her from childhood. Johanna went open-eyed with the husband of her choice into poverty and the hardest toil. Proudly and uncomplainingly she endured her self-chosen destiny, until her health failed. She had comprehended the misery, the full woe of a vainly struggling, terribly impoverished life, and from the darkness of this limitless suffering rose — the poetess. The poverty

and menial labor to which my poor beloved sister has been bound have destroyed her health. True, her only thought is for her two children, to be permitted to live and work for them! Work with a body emaciated to a mere skeleton! Her sole answer to every entreaty for care and caution is a faint smile."

I may probably regard as an equally characteristic contribution to the description of the nature of the poetess a selection of sentences from her own letters :

Whoever, like me, has sat at the same board with want, and drunk from the same cup with penury, knows what life is.

In my hands ornament would be irony.

I have my children, the Muse — what care I for the world?

I withdraw from mere gayety, but music and singing can fairly snatch me away from earth.

I am accustomed to judge my own faults severely, yet always to extenuate those of others with "If and But."

What is the best thing for poor people? Sound limbs.

In my youth I often wept from longing and homesickness for knowledge.

Wealth is a luxuriant plant which every one

admires ; but no one asks from what soil it has sprung.

In Germany death is the poet's best letter of introduction.

Yes, I, too, wish I had bags of money, — not for myself ; but I would like to give to all who suffer want.

Nothing is so insatiable as the human heart. If it has enough to eat and drink, it longs for costly gear ; and if it obtains that also, it would fain have the blue sky for a table-cloth.

Woman's greatest misfortune is — to be obliged to rule.

A woman who complains is despised.

When I write a poem, I am so excited, so carried away from the world, that I seem a stranger to myself.

God knows what is good ; He had compassion upon my burden and sent me the angel of comfort (the Muse).

How sorrowful the half-blown roses look to-day (after a hoar-frost) ! Probably it is the same with a late love.

Never flatter me, always speak the truth ; it is harsh, but healthful.

I will never give up my faith ; I may be bruised, but not broken.



My method of writing is as follows : either I freely pursue my own way without stopping across hedge and ditch, or I stumble over the first blade of grass. Most of the poems are written at one dash ; others, where I have to improve and correct, show the traces of it.

To be poor is hard, to be ill is harder ; and yet what are all physical sufferings compared to those which a fettered soul endures ?

It costs a great deal to be a Christian.

Often an hour is enough to grow old.

To him who can quench his thirst at the spring it is incomprehensible how the poor man, who only catches drops from fragments of vessels, can laud them as a cordial.

The heart dictates, the mind does the work, and the soul sings the rhythm.

My modest appeal to the German nation had thus far met with unexpectedly good success. In East Prussia, especially, people vied with one another in obtaining, by means of charitable performances, money with which to alleviate the hard fate of the gifted poetess. In Königsberg large sums were obtained, and in Erfurt the results were equally favorable. Considerable amounts came from individual benefactors, to whom, in the name of the poetess, I express my warmest thanks. My petition to the Tiedge Institution was

answered with the grant of liberal assistance, and the Schiller Institution promised similar aid. So it is to be hoped that the sadly impaired health of the poetess may be strengthened, if not fully restored, by the money now at her disposal, for she will be able to do more for the relief of her physical sufferings.

It is my duty to prove that, in the numerous discussions of Johanna Ambrosius's poems which have hitherto appeared, most critics have laid too much stress upon what our poetess has read. Some of her verse is compared with Goethe's,—she has only now become acquainted with the poems of Goethe and Schiller through the kindness of a lady. Yet it is certain that she derived a thousand-fold more profit from her limited reading than do many others who devour books. She writes thus in one of her letters to me: "So even *one* description from the 'Gartenlaube' was enough for me to live upon for months. If during the twelve mute years I had had annually a single volume of Lessing, Goethe, or Schiller, how rich I should be now! Yes, reading lay open before me, but without words or printer's ink."

Many of her poems within this brief period have been set to music. Up to this time the following have been made known to me: "Invitation," "My Love," "Not within Earth's Gloomy Bosom," "Oh, Love Thou too," "For my Child," "Parted," "Defence," "Shut what Moves Thee;" "Fata Morgana,"

by Ed. Meier in Carlsruhe ; "At the Fireside ;"  
 "Open thy Heart," by the leader of the royal band,  
 Wolff, in Tilsit ; "It is Enough ;" "For Thee," by  
 Otto Steinwender in Memel ; "A Summer Night ;"  
 "For Thee," by Dr. Robert Laser in Lasdehnen ;  
 "Home," for a quartette of male voices, by Georg  
 Schmerberg in Berlin ; "My Native Land," by Dr.  
 Robert Laser of Lasdehnen, by Ballet Director A.  
 Falkenhagen, by Frau Magdalene Charisius, and as  
 a march by Herr Ohnesorg, Director of the orchestra  
 in Königsberg, Prussia ; "The Sound of the Bells ;"  
 and "What I Love," by Ed. Dubsky of Pressburg.

In conclusion, I cannot omit to insert here my dear  
 friend's poetic thanks to the Dramatic Amateur So-  
 ciety of Königsberg, because, though only an occa-  
 sional poem, its simple beauty is specially charming.

How soon, how soon I shall forgotten be !  
 How swiftly clouds of incense fade away,  
 How swiftly withers fairest laurel leaf,  
 And no one asks or where or whence it came.  
 It will be well. — I shall go forth again  
 Unto my daily task, and see the grain,  
 The blades of grass grow ever higher, higher,  
 Shall listen to the lark's sweet matin song,  
 And shake from off my skirts the glistening dew.  
 Into the wood's green shades gaze thirstily,  
 And peace and solitude drink in once more.  
 Toil here and there, with hands long trained, as ever,  
 In house and fields, the little garden visit,

Perchance, from an old habit, lightly kiss  
The tender leaves of the young cherry-trees  
I planted, lift the vine's luxuriant arms,  
That they may twine into an arbor fair  
Shelter to give in summer's burning heat.  
No sigh will e'er escape for vanished days,  
Those days when high aloft was I exalted,  
Days when the waves of happiness, high-surgin,  
Flung up to my poor heart gold-glitt'ring spray,  
When veiled was I, as though in a bright halo,  
By incense sweet of many a human heart.  
'T is past, 't is past! On earth all things soon vanish,  
And no long time hath happiness to dwell;  
Their chiming now the vesper-bells have ceased.  
The notes so eloquent no longer sound —  
How soon, how soon I shall forgotten be!  
But faithful memory will I ever hold  
Of ye, all ye, who once to me have given  
Joy's brimming beaker for my lips to quaff.  
By day and night I'll hold ye in my heart,  
And often talk with ye while at my work,  
How dear to me ye've been, how kind, how friendly, —  
Greeting will I send to ye by my song,  
Till comes the day when heart and lips are mute!

February 22, 1895

I am animated by but a single wish, — that an equally auspicious destiny may attend this new edition. It would be incomprehensible to me if a voice so poetic as that of our authoress should not be heard; incomprehensible if a great nation should permit such a poetess to perish in poverty, sorrow, and anxiety.

I express with confidence what I have already once believed myself justified in saying, — namely, when I published the poems of Katharina Koch, — Proud may well be the nation from whose lower classes such poetic voices echo.

**KARL WEISS-SCHRATTENTHAL.**

**PRESSBURG, Kisfaludygasse 22,  
June, 1895.**

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**NOTE.**

At the close of this volume is an interesting criticism by Herman Grimm; also a graphic description is reprinted, from the pen of an American journalist, of the visit of a messenger from the Empress of Germany conveying donations and honors to the peasant poetess.

*d*





*PRELUDE.*

*Not by form and rhythm judge me,  
Nothing have I learned of them,—  
These are wildling flowers only,  
Sometimes decked with dew-drop's gem;  
Blasted here and there by tempest,  
As they grow in moor and fields,  
All are torn from out my heart's nest,  
Like those Mother Nature yields.*

*JOHANNA AMBROSIUS.*

*Gr. Wersmeninken, near Laisdehnen  
(East Prussia), July 2, 1894.*





# SONG AND SORROW.

I



# POEMS.

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## SONG AND SORROW.

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### INVITATION.

**H**OW long without wilt thou waiting stand?  
Come in, thou dear and welcome guest;  
Too fiercely the winds sweep o'er the land, —  
Come, for a brief hour with me rest.  
In vain for shelter humbly pleading,  
From door to door long didst thou roam:  
How thou hast suffered while help needing!  
Come, rest at last within my home.

In comfort sit thou down beside me,  
Lay thy dear head my hands within;  
Then will the peace return full surely  
Reft by this evil world of sin.  
With the soft whirl of wings unfolding,  
From thy heart's depths sweet love will rise,  
With magic touch thy grave lips moulding,  
Till their loved smile doth greet my eyes.

Come, rest : close my embrace will hold thee ;  
So long as but one pulse beats yet,  
Ne'er will my heart turn from thee coldly,  
Or even in the grave forget.  
Thou look'st at me with timid longing ;  
Mute still, despite the promised rest ;  
Thy sole reply is tears swift thronging :  
Come, weep thy fill upon my breast.

AT THE FIRESIDE.

I LOVE the dusky twilight hour  
When at my fireside I sit,  
And watch its jaws of flame outpour,  
Light, graceful forms, which upward flit.

Like living flowers swift they rise,  
Where its red heart most deeply glows,  
And deck, like maids with laughing eyes,  
Their breasts with a golden rose.

Their curls — gay, glitt'ring serpents sleek —  
Mount writhing, dart toward me,  
And breathe upon my faded cheek  
Youth's vanished sorcery.

And higher mid the radiance, see,  
Their arms they stretch into the night,  
In a wild dance of elfin glee  
Which stirs the heart with keen delight.

While burning kisses fervid glow,  
And still the whirling dance goes on,  
Ere longing doth fulfilment know —  
By their own flames consumed, they 're gone.

My head upon my hand I rest,  
Gaze at the hearth, so dull, so dark ;  
Would that the fire within my breast  
Might die as soon to its last spark !

## IT IS ENOUGH.

**I**T is enough! Cease thine assailing,  
In dust my limbs lie wearily.  
Thou calm'st the meanest creature's wailing :  
Must I alone forgotten be ?  
Wouldst thou destroy me? Well, here stand I,  
Awaiting still thy sword-blade's sough ;  
But torture not with blows so sorely,  
And stay thy hand. It is enough !

It is enough ! These chains inflaming  
With hellish fire my aching heart,—  
All powerless are words in naming  
The boundless anguish of their smart.  
From gyves the criminal aye loose we,  
When dragged to doom by jailers rough :  
Wilt thou not cast one glance in mercy  
My guilt upon? It is enough !

It is enough ! All earth's woes feeling,  
I've suffered till my soul is sick ;  
Have fought till, bleeding, bruised past healing,  
Wounded I lie unto the quick.  
See through my hands the tremor gliding ;  
My feeble breath full soon will cease :  
Thou Judge, o'er life and death presiding,  
It is enough ! Oh, grant me peace !

## EJACULATORY PRAYER.

**T**HERE is no grief on earth, however fell,  
    Within whose heart no spark of joy doth dwell.  
Yet mine hath not even that ray of pleasure !  
    Who can it measure ?

To still keep silence when, in fiercest anguish,  
The heart must unto death with longing languish ;  
Against the bruised breast the hard rocks clasping,  
    And sharp thorns grasping !

In bonds to lie, incapable of movement,  
No spot to lay the head for sleep's balm potent,  
No drop of cordial to parched lips to proffer,  
    Yet battle offer !

So strive we onward to the grave's dark portal,  
Until we speak our last words with lips mortal ;  
Until the soul doth from the body sever,  
    Peace cometh never !

But in the boundless space beyond earth glowing  
Lies the true happiness I'm sure of knowing !  
A thousand suns with rays of joy are beaming  
    Beyond my dreaming !



**MY FRIEND.**

**M**Y verse to thee I 'm dedicating,  
Mine own familiar friend,  
O Pain! who shares my couch while waiting  
For dawn with night to blend.

Before the door of my house standing,  
He bares his shining blade,  
And challenges all: hence commanding  
Those unasked who invade.

To be our guest he doth full often  
His sister Sorrow press;  
Long does she rest in house and croft then,  
And stitches me a dress.

Of all companions he 's most constant;  
My wine to pour he 's fain;  
And a fresh cup, aye vigilant,  
He fills when one I drain.

Now envy ye not my estate  
Who such a friend hath found?  
Death only can us separate,  
So closely are we bound.

## CONFLICT AND PEACE.

STRIFE for a quarter-century,  
 With nor sword-thrust, nor battle-cry,  
 Nor powder-smoke, nor victory,  
 Nor St. John's Knight in the mêlée.  
 Yet many were the conflicts hot,  
 Of which the idle world recked naught ;  
 How dire the peril often grew  
 God only knew.

E'en to the depths of my soul rent,  
 With wounds in hands and feet sore spent,  
 Crushed beneath many a cruel heel,  
 How sharp the pangs they made me feel !  
 How I have wept and moaned and sighed,  
 While my foe's cruel taunts replied ;  
 How to the mark each keen shaft flew,  
 God only knew.

Evening draws near, a cool breeze blows,  
 The stress of battle feebler grows ;  
 Sometimes the lips which pain has blanched,  
 Utter a sigh — the blood is stanchèd —  
 Past is the anguish of the fray,  
 A star shines with a gentle ray,  
 Peace comes — the path of trial trod —  
 Bestowed by God.

**THE POET.**

**W**HAT needs the poet for his singing?  
What knowledge must he call his own?  
Comfort to thousand hearts he's bringing:  
He surely has a magic stone.

Yet little is required for fitting  
The poet to perform his task,  
The while in spirit he is flitting  
In sunbright upland meads to bask.

When, daily labor terminating,  
Sleep doth thee to its arms entice,  
He groans in fierce throes of creating,  
And strives for the lost Paradise.

His breast is filled with eager yearning,  
Nor peace nor rest doth he e'er find;  
With all men's tears his eyes are burning,  
He bears the burdens of mankind.

Deep into beauty's fountain diving,  
He seeks the noblest treasure there;  
In heartfelt prayers forever striving  
With God to grant ye flow'rets fair.

Not for himself he asketh blessing ;  
Content is he if, in his song,  
He bringeth aught for your refreshing :  
For gold or thanks he doth not long.

With his heart's blood he dyes the roses,  
His hot tears blanch the lilies pale ;  
The smallest leaf which here reposes  
Doth from his heavy sighs exhale.

The gray hairs in his locks unheeding,  
He cares not for his own deep grief ;  
The cordial other hearts are needing,  
To bring, his genius deemeth chief.

Therefore his songs in your hearts treasure  
As fondly as your child you hold ;  
None know what anguish beyond measure  
Each birth has cost, what grief untold !

MY MUSE.

ONCE I lived from day to day,  
Nor joy nor sorrow felt ;  
Scarcely knew myself, so like  
Were all with whom I dwelt.

But as this I realized,  
And 'gan o'er it to fret,  
Yawned my heart as if weary :  
Something may happen yet.

Some one tapped lightly. "Enter,  
I called, almost dismayed.  
"What ! Is it you, my old friend,  
Pain ? Hast thou hither strayed ?"

"Yes, my child," softly stroking  
My cheeks the while he spake :  
"Tell me, for whom with longing  
So great doth thy heart ache ?"

"For my Muse, who once taught me  
To sing full many a song.  
Without a single visit  
For months I 've waited long.

“ Now sit thee down beside me ;  
Else shall I be alone.  
We two have talked together  
Oft while the pale moon shone.”

So sat he down beside me,  
Kissing me o'er and o'er ;  
E'en as the first he gave me,  
I found my songs once more :

“ Let the Muse farther wander,  
If only thee I have ! ”  
A smile of secret meaning  
Rests on his lips so grave.

“ Take back that sentence hasty,  
For, lo ! your Muse am I ;  
Always have I been faithful.”  
I kissed him tenderly.

DOST THOU ASK ?

**A**SKEST thou why in mine eyes  
The tears so thickly spring?  
Wherefore I do wail and sigh ;  
What grief my heart doth wring?  
Ah ! if within the presence  
Of my woe thou couldst stand,  
Thou wouldst pity me ; but, ah !  
Thou dost not understand !

Whate'er these lips, so pallid,  
May breathe in sorrow deep,  
They ne'er can voice the anguish  
Which doth my whole heart steep.  
If it could only tell thee  
How, 'neath Fate's iron hand,  
'T is breaking, thou wouldst pity :  
Thou canst not understand !

No recent sorrow is it,  
No common daily smart,  
When thus by vulture talons  
Torn fiercely is my heart.  
Whoe'er is, while still living,  
Quartered by headsman's hand,  
These hellish tortures knoweth,  
Thou canst not understand !

Easy it is to censure,  
When we the guilt know not, —  
Or fan to fiercer blazing  
A fire already hot.  
Who ne'er at night hath wandered  
In darkness through the land,  
Can never comprehend me :  
Thou dost not understand !

Then leave me to my weeping  
O'er all that stirs me so ;  
Full soon the night eternal  
Brings rest to us below.  
Some day, to all His children,  
God will their fate allot :  
He only can condemn them ;  
But thou — thou mayest not !



MY SONG.

MY song I will not sell for gold ;  
Nor fame nor honor 'll buy it ;  
I sing it for myself alone,  
Or praise ye or decry it.  
No master e'er hath taught the art,  
Nor have I learned one feature ;  
The music came direct from God,  
The words were writ by Nature.

Full oft the breeze of morning bears  
A page from distant regions ;  
I marvel when I note the things  
Which men must learn in legions.  
If rhyme be faulty, all condemn ;  
And if 't is not quite flawless,  
One poet's work another blames  
With judgment far too lawless.

A foot 's here missing, there a rhyme ;  
Then undue flourish grieves them.  
Full eagerly they strive and toil  
Until the turf receives them.  
My song of solitude I sing,  
With all its many errors ;  
'T is for myself and for my God :  
The critic hath no terrors.

Therefore, kind friends, strive not to teach  
    Me learning's strict rules narrow ;  
The nightingale's notes do not ask  
    From throat of northern sparrow.  
Yet thanks I give for fame and praise,  
    With all their fleeting glitter ;  
From practice as a cook, I know  
    The laurel's leaf is bitter.

MY LOVE.

AS from the bush a rose we break,  
Thou 'rt gone to thy repose ;  
Thine eyes did my whole life-light make,  
My hands their lids must close.

They loudly grieved, watched thy last sleep,  
To thee with kisses clung ;  
Naught did I, but, in darkness deep,  
My hands in anguish wrung.

They brought thee flowers to enwreath  
Thy form with garlands fair ;  
I laid my heart thy feet beneath,  
Within the tomb's chill air.

They planted a green willow-tree  
To beautify thy grave ;  
But I its branches with a sea  
Of hot tears watered have.

Then placed they there a tombstone fine,  
With date of year and name ;  
Unseen in my heart's depths doth shine  
One marked with words of flame.

They wander oft thy grave unto ;  
I sit and weep alone.  
How fervent was my love, and true,  
Only to God is known !

**FOR THEE.**

**S**O dearly I love thee, beyond belief.  
Yet ne'er must thou know the secret.  
Fain would I once, drawing near like a thief,  
A kiss from thy hands in thy sleep get.

Fain would I once from the spirit-world flit,  
The tale of my love thee telling ;  
With eyes untroubled I'd then submit  
To tortures my death-doom knelling.

But when no longer on earth thou hast place,  
And none here do still bewail thee,  
Full loudly I'll shriek to the worlds of space !  
My love to express, words would fail me.



**PICTURES OF LIFE**

**FROM NATURE, FROM HOME.**





# PICTURES OF LIFE

FROM NATURE, FROM HOME.

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## THE BLIND WOMAN AND THE DEAF MUTE.

**T**HE townfolk hold their yearly fair to-day,  
The bright sun laughs from sky without a cloud,  
And long did I beside the fountain stay  
Watching the movements of the noisy crowd.  
Whips loudly crack, men shout in hoarse, deep tones ;  
The rich upon their velvet cushions lean,  
And one of the bleak Pussta's ragged sons  
With spurs struck in his horse's flanks is seen.  
Here the gay laugh of happy childhood rings,  
There angry tears and curses fierce upbraid ;  
Here a glad greeting from friends new-met springs,  
There for the lost a hasty search is made.  
A voice amid the tumult reached my ear  
From 'neath the ancient linden's branches low,  
Above the medley often ringing clear :  
" Oh, pity take upon the blind one's woe !

My greatest treasure I have wholly lost,  
 The fairest gift which we in life obtain, —  
 Oh, do not coldly pass me at my post,  
 Let me not plead to ye to-day in vain.  
 The blessed light of Heav'n I cannot see,  
 Into my child's eyes can I never gaze ;  
 And, until death doth set my spirit free,  
 Eternal darkness must shroud all my days ! ”  
 From people simple both in heart and mind,  
 Falls coin on coin, soft as compassion's balm ;  
 From such alone her prayers an answer find.  
 Rejoiced was I to see her store increase.  
 But near a man with angry glance did stand,  
 He would have wished this woman's luck to 'cease ;  
 Full rarely alms was flung into *his* hand,  
 Yet still his large eyes asked as plain as words,  
 The while he ever rang his little bell,  
 “ Why do ye all add to this woman's hoards ?  
 Do ye deem my infirmity less fell ?  
 Am I not robbed of the sweet gift of speech ?  
 Are not my ears from sound forever sealed ?  
 Why should this woman's woes alone by each  
 Be pitied ? That the world's from sight concealed ?  
 To all the earth her suff'rings she can shriek,  
 While I must shut mine in my inmost heart ;  
 From the alms begged to-day she 'll comfort seek,  
 And with them can relieve her sorrow's smart.”  
 Thus thinks the poor wretch, and at once he slips  
 His meagre gains upon the scales of woe, —  
 The balance toward the woman slightly dips ;

Whoe'er hath larger wealth, content must know.

E'en as wan Envy's talons interlace  
And firmer hold strive on his heart to lay,  
His little daughter looks into his face ;  
A loving greeting her sweet eyes convey.

Then suddenly upon his soul dawns clear  
The revelation of his better hap ;  
And swiftly to the woman drawing near,  
He lets a penny fall into her lap.

Lifting his child, again and yet again  
He clasps her, the while gazing o'er and o'er.

He still can *see* ! What joy amid his pain !  
As down his cheeks the hot tears burning pour,

He firmly moves — not once irresolute —  
On past the linden with its branches low,  
His glance still pleading, though his lips are mute :  
“ Oh, pity take upon the blind one's woe ! ”

## LET HER SLEEP!

WHERE the golden corn is rustling and the  
forest's shadow ceases,  
Where bright children of the summer barter kisses  
with the breezes,  
Where the chaste eyes of the timid roe are through  
the leafage gazing, —  
By the roadside sleeps a little girl in the fierce noon-  
tide's blazing.

Her golden curls are glittering like the sunbeams on  
them streaming,  
Her shoulders bare through many a rent in ragged  
gown are gleaming ;  
With tender touch the grass-blades green her sun-  
burned wee feet cover,  
Gay butterflies, like brilliant gems, above them flit  
and hover.

Save the bees' hum, sound there is none ; but the elfin  
whispers wooing,  
From the green dusk of the dense woods comes the  
hidden dove's faint cooing ;

Their silken locks from off their brows the ears of  
corn are sweeping,  
All things breathe the happiness and peace: the child  
smiles e'en while sleeping.

Her dreams are like the quiet scene by fair Nature's  
hand created,  
By no foe as yet 'tis menaced, by no tempest  
devastated ;  
Happy is she as the flowers which no thought take for  
the morrow,  
Soaring upward on light bird-wings, all untouched by  
care or sorrow.

Playmates of the radiant angels sees she in each child  
of mortal,  
From the palace to the hovel to one family belong  
all.  
Days of childhood, with thy dreams lead all the little  
lambkins tender,  
Whether clad in rags or silk, in the same fairy mead to  
wander.

Long before the little maid I stood and deeply  
meditated,  
Gazing at the lovely vision till my soul was fully  
sated ;  
With gesture stern a boy waved back, the noisy lad's  
plan thwarting.  
For his own sport to see the child at his touch from  
slumber starting.

Gayly singing, roved he onward, while with footsteps  
light I glided  
'Neath the pines, amid whose branches solemn  
murmurs ne'er subsided.  
Grant to youth its peaceful slumber, leave the fair  
child to her dreaming,  
Nor think Life's hand will fail to do its duty—save  
in seeming.

## THE OLD MAID.

SOME laugh as she goes by — and some deride —  
From her night-watch the couch of pain beside ;  
All whom she sees, for moments howe'er fleeting,  
Sneer, " Sleet spoiled her luck-harvest " at the  
meeting.

Once thou wert young ; a slender little bird  
Carolling forth each joy thy young heart stirred ;  
Thy Spring-tide cheer hath poverty swift taken, —  
'T was done ere thou didst to thy loss awaken.

Fair Summer came, and to thee found her way ;  
But all too soon snapped Pleasure's slender stay.  
How deep soe'er thy heart with grief was flooded,  
It bled in silence, and complaint eluded.

And now before thy door stern Autumn stands,  
Thinning thy scanty locks with ruthless hands,  
Yielding thee up to the sharp fangs of sorrow,  
While thou dost anxious wait for Winter's morrow.

The light of former days thy glance doth lack ;  
No longer look'st thou forward, scarce e'en back ;  
Only when suff'ring is for aid appealing,  
Thy noble heart impels thee to bring healing.

Thy ready hand to help is ever strong,—  
No day for thee too hot, no road too long ;  
Though for reward but hate thou wast receiving,  
Loyal to deeds of charity still cleaving.

Then go thy way, O woman much disdained,  
With beauteous soul in body worn contained !  
From mock'ry undeserved and bitter scorning  
Will bloom a myrtle wreath for thy adorning.



**A MAY NIGHT.**

**T**HE moon is rising! With one more breath  
gasping,  
To rest doth lay him down the weary wind ;  
The flowerets, their hands devoutly clasping,  
Their eyes close slowly, sweet repose to find.  
An atmosphere of peace the wood and wold sways,  
Millions of pearls the lake's bright waters strew ;  
Along the forest's green and moss-grown pathways  
With flying feet hastens the timid roe.

A silver rain drips from the smallest wavelet  
Whereon the water-lily's head doth lean ;  
By longings urged, which no fulfilment have yet,  
The nixie rises through the cool tide's sheen.  
From hedge and willow a sweet song entrances,  
The nightingale's love-notes float through the air, —  
The nixie hears, and to its music dances,  
Twining the fairest roses in her hair.

What whispers low, what secret mystic signals,  
Faint, bell-like chimes echo from star to star !  
Meseems that Heaven has flung wide its portals,  
And angel voices reach me from afar.

Stirred by her calm and quiet breathing only,  
Our kindly mother Nature's breast appears ;  
And from Day's burning cheeks, prostrate and weary,  
Is kissed away the last trace of her tears.

And thou, my heart ! ah, cease thy troubled weeping,  
As if thy future held but storm and noontide-blaze ;  
See'st thou not love's eternal banner sweeping  
Its outstretched folds o'er the sun-chariot's rays ?  
So, too, for thee the fields now scorched by sorrow  
One day will lie beneath the moon's mild sheen,  
E'en as, within the crystal waters' still flow,  
The image of eternal peace is seen.

## THE FAIREST SPRING.

**I**N winter's cold I sat my window near, —  
Broad fields, snow-whitened, lay in stillness drear ;  
A row of icicles hung from the roof ;  
A rest old Grand'ther North had ta'en, the proof.  
In silence deep my woods beloved stood,  
No bird-notes sweet trilled in melodious flood ;  
The white flakes drift where dark the gray sky low'rs,  
Spectral and soft as fragrance of dead flow'rs.  
An angry glance toward my garden strayed, —  
Dead, dead, all dead ! Sad thoughts my spirit  
swayed.

Ah, why is Summer's joy so quickly past ?  
Why do the roses sweet no longer last ?  
Why must such radiance of bloom be all  
Enshrouded 'neath pale wreath and fun'ral pall ?  
I will admit my heart with rancor swelled ;  
I closed my lids, beneath which tear-drops welled : —  
But, hark ! what voices rise so clear and strong,  
Ringing like bells the frozen street along ?  
A merry giggle, and the glad refrain  
Of laughter. Raise the window I would fain.  
Two children these, of fifteen, sixteen years ;  
With long, thick locks, and eyes undimmed by tears.

The tall brunette — dear little daughter mine,  
Slender and lithe as her own native pine —  
Her arm close round her little friend has drawn,  
Who glances round her like a sportive fawn.  
No sooner have they seen me than both come,  
Like snowflakes blown into my little room.  
Dream I? Can it be real? This spring-tide scent,  
Perfume of violets and jasmine blent?  
Whence flew so many thousand birdlings bright,  
So gayly twittering to greet the light?  
Does not the stream flow through the meadows green,  
While butterflies flit o'er of varied sheen?  
And yonder do not — scarlet treasure sweet —  
Strawberries mid the flowery grass us greet?  
Ah, no; not *something* here ye both do bring, —  
Ye are the whole incarnate radiant Spring!  
Like rosebush with a wealth of buds ye stand,  
Or the green crops, a promise to the land!  
From the clear light of joy within your eyes  
Unconscious beams the glory of May skies!  
Abashed and penitent I recognize:  
Ye are the fairest Spring God can devise.

## MY WORLD.

A WARM thatched roof, 'neath which peer windows  
small ;  
A lush green vine, thick clust'ring o'er the wall ;  
And level, flower-gemmed, low-lying meads ;  
A narrow path which to the cornfields leads ;  
The little plain encircled by pine woods,  
Where it is bliss to rest in dreamy moods ;  
Blithe birds that cheer the heart with roundelay ;  
The peaceful graveyard a few steps away ;  
A glimpse of the blue sky, like azure shrine, —  
How small, how poor doth seem this world of mine !

Yet as, when vesper bells their summons peal,  
Returning home I weary, hungry, feel ;  
See from my hut the smoke's light column rise,  
While in the glowing west day, flaming, dies ;  
My child springs toward me with exulting shout,  
And from the hearth a cheerful blaze gleams out ;  
When everything breathes evening's sweet repose,  
And with hand on the bolt my door I close ;  
When in the heav'ns star after star doth shine, —  
How grand, how glorious is this world of mine !

I envy not the rich man's splendor rare,  
His marble tables, golden goblets fair,  
Chimes of sweet bells, the stately steeple's pride,  
Or the cool flow of ocean's wondrous tide ;  
I know that happiness lies everywhere,  
Perchance most willingly the cot doth share ;  
The blossom's fragrance is borne on the wind ;  
In narrow confines sweetest fruits we find.  
Well for me if my home doth God enshrine,  
For naught then would I change this world of mine !

**THE LITTLE GOLD RING.**

**W**HY lurest thou with golden glitter,  
O little ring, the maiden's eye?  
Who pledges troth to thee, with bitter  
Anguish and grief must freedom buy.

With blissful pain the fair girl presses  
Thee to her lips, unfeeling thing!  
To hearts betrayed, when shame distresses,  
Last' anchor, hope, to which they cling!

The bond of every true love sealing,  
When soul to soul doth find its way;  
Many thy hoop a bolt are feeling,  
Which bars them from their heaven for aye.

## A SUMMER NIGHT.

HER soft, cool arms extending,  
Night comes anew ;  
Fields, woods, and meadows clasping  
Her heart unto ;

With mantle light enwrapping  
Each tree and bush,  
While murmuring tones the world  
To dreams doth hush.

The earth hath now forgotten  
Day's misery ;  
Mine eyes I lift in longing  
Toward the sky.

I see a wee bird soaring  
In sunset's glow :  
Ah, would my heart, so weary,  
With it might go !



**HOME.**

**M**Y native land I will not leave,  
Whatever may be told ;  
Above all other countries it  
Doth shine like purest gold.  
Let Fortune smile in other realms,  
In richer pomp of hue,  
Nowhere save in my native land  
Laughs sun from skies as blue.

**M**y native land I will not leave ;  
My parents' home is here,  
**A** quiet sanctuary which  
I draw in rev'rence near.  
Each foot of soil is hallowed ground,  
More sacred naught can be ;  
E'en with no priestly ritual,  
The tears spring to mine e'e.

**M**y native land I will not leave,  
No matter what may come,  
**A**lthough all suddenly should dawn  
The final day of doom.

I know that then the world will pass  
    Away in smoke and dust ;  
But my loved Germany will shine  
    A star in Heav'n, I trust.

MY NATIVE LAND.

ALL tell me that thou art not fair,  
Beloved native land !  
No crown of mountain heights dost wear,  
No robe of vines' green band ;  
No eagle in thy sky appears,  
No palm-tree greets the eye ;  
But the primeval world's bright tears<sup>1</sup>  
Along thy coast-lines lie.

No metals dost thou give the king,  
Diamonds nor purple robe ;  
The truest hearts thy offering  
That beat in all earth's globe.  
For battle thou dost bring the steed  
Worth tons of shining gold,  
Strong men to curb the charger's speed  
And the keen sword to hold.

And when I walk in dreamy hour  
Through sombre fir-woods wide,  
And see the mighty oak-trees tow'r  
Aloft in royal pride ;

<sup>1</sup> Amber.

When, echoing from Memel's strand,  
Floats song of nightingale,  
And o'er the distant dune's white sand  
The snowy gull doth sail, —

Such blissful raptures o'er me throng  
No language can convey ;  
I pour my joy forth in a song  
Attuned to music gay.  
E'en though thy robe is simple, and  
No mountains crown thy brow,  
Long live East Prussia ! Native land,  
How wondrous fair art thou !

## Groß-Wersmenten.

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### “VILLAGE BY THE SPRING.”

**F**ROM hills so gently sloping,  
Thy clear eyes widely oping,  
Thou front'st the world, O village mine !  
No walls for thy adornment,  
Naught save the German peasant,  
In straw-thatched hut of rude design.

Where the bright spring clear gushes,  
And to the valley rushes  
Through meadows green, with course so fleet ;  
The azure flowers sprinkling,  
Like eyes of maidens twinkling,  
Each thirsty wanderer to greet.

While round ye close advances,  
Like hundred thousand lances,  
The dark pine-forest's sombre edge,  
Within whose depths soft cooing  
Is heard of wild doves wooing,  
And happy dreams are each one's privilege.

Fair art thou when, while meadow  
And pastures still the dews show,  
Thou 'rt roused by larks' sweet matin lays ;  
When through the forest branches  
The sun his bright rays launches  
With flashing eyes into thy face to gaze.

When quiet eve comes stealing,  
Sunset's last glow concealing,  
Like thank-offerings skyward cleaves  
The smoke from chimneys streaming,  
While, like the bright stars beaming,  
Light after light shines through the leaves.

Still and secluded lying,  
When from faithful labor hieing  
Thy wearied ones sweet slumber seek ;  
No mill-wheel's noisy whirring,  
Thee from thy slumber stirring,  
Is heard ; no engine's piercing shriek.

Fair art thou always, whether  
Dewdrops or snowflakes gather,  
Or in the golden harvest's state.  
Ah ! peerless is thy beauty  
When 'neath the glowing Spring sky,  
Mid thousand blossoms, thou dost wait.

Then on thy breezes blowing  
Comes sweet scent of flowers growing ;  
'Neath snows of bloom thy houses stand,

While over the cool highway,  
And every narrow byway,  
Lies richest carpet in the land.

From their rooms swiftly slipping,  
The girls and boys are skipping,  
With merry dance they Spring salute ;  
From the woods ring cuckoo's notes,  
From the neighboring hillside floats  
The music of the shepherd's flute.

When on Sunday softly stealing,  
Sweet tones of bells appealing,  
From distant steeple call, Come ! Come !  
Thy pious people hasten —  
Or gray their locks or gold — then  
Devoutly to their Father's home.

Our German manners ancient  
Thou hold'st with fond attachment,  
My village ! here still blooms faith's flower ;  
Here girlish hearts are dwelling, —  
Chaste snowdrops, sin repelling,  
Guarded by fairy good in every hour.

From hills so gently sloping,  
Long, long, thy clear eyes oping,  
The world confront, O village mine !  
No artist e'er will paint thee,  
Yet always radiantly  
A gem in Germany thou 'lt shine.





PICTURES OF THE COUNTRY.



## PICTURES OF THE COUNTRY.

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### I.

#### GOOD LUCK.

**M**Y daughter, be the rich man's wife,  
Provided then thou 'lt be for life,  
And need not hunger more.  
His house can with a castle vie,  
His purse is full, his standing high,  
His fields with sheaves run o'er.

Two dresses he has also brought ;  
This hat — is n't it splendid? — bought.  
How fine your clothes will be !  
I 'll joy in your good fortune, too,  
While thinking of the poor girls who  
Envy your finery.

The lovely child, with cheeks as pale  
As cherry blooms which young boughs veil,  
Looks downward dreamily.

O tender bud in morn's soft glow,  
Not yet love's fervor dost thou know,  
Thy heart is calm and free !

She sees the gewgaws, the tale hears  
Her mother dins into her ears, —  
Life will be joy alone.  
And almost ere she is aware  
Before the altar stand the pair :  
Her " Yes " has made them one.

She trembles with a thrill of fear  
When bends her husband's gray head near,  
And she his kiss doth wait.  
A curious custom 't is, in sooth,  
To give cold age the bloom of youth, —  
Winter and Spring to mate.

Fair, very fair, she looks, and good, —  
Girl-wife with face like milk and blood, —  
Faithful in all is she.  
Her eyes, of heaven's deepest blue,  
No tears dim with their misty dew,  
No shapes of horror see.

Her lips smile as in former days,  
Not e'en a whisper e'er betrays  
If her chains burn like flame.  
Though 't were in the confessional,  
No word of disrespect doth fall  
Blent with her husband's name.

Only when, shut within her room,  
She opes her closet door, doth come  
Cry shrill as lyre's snapped string :  
“ Two dresses and a showy hat, —  
My mother thought me worth just that !  
How small a price brides bring ! ”

## II.

## P E A C E.

**M**IDST the fields of growing crops encircled by  
green pine-trees sombre,  
World-forgotten, world-secluded, lies a home of  
peasant farmer.  
Pleasantly its gables white peer through the emerald  
green branches,  
Peace incarnate ; every breath says, Sorrow here no  
sharp dart launches.

Softly from the pipe the water o'er the mossy gray  
stones rushes ;  
On the threshold lies a kitten, blinking in eve's glow-  
ing blushes ;  
Doves are in the dove-cotes cooing, swallows to and  
fro are soaring ;  
High above both dove and swallow larks their joy in  
song are pouring.

Straight as sacrifice of Abel, rising in eve's gold and  
crimson,  
From the thatched roof's narrow chimney mounts the  
smoke's light airy column.

Where are all the busy farm hands, where does the  
young mistress linger?  
Through the bending grain she's coming, her child  
clinging to her finger.

White as marble and grief-shadowed are the young  
wife's lovely features,  
As the fragments of her pottery from off the ground  
she gathers.  
Has a tempest fierce swept through the house with  
frantic fury raging?  
Had the garden, courtyard, farm, no guard 'gainst a  
foe such warfare waging?

But her hand she lifts for silence ; mid the ruins she  
is weeping ;  
In the jasmine arbor lies her husband, with his bottle  
sleeping.  
O fair Nature ! even where thy peace so happily has  
nested,  
Ever has the serpent sin from thee thy innocence  
thus wrested.

## III.

## SWEET LITTLE MARIE.

AH! Marie, my own sweet Marie so dear,  
If thy promise my wife to be I could hear!  
E'en though as poor as beggars we,  
Yet arm in arm both warm will be.  
Become my wife, that I a heart  
May have to share each joy and smart.  
If thou wilt bless me with thy "Yes,"  
I'll grudge no king his happiness. —  
The organ sounds, and the bells ring their peal:  
In borrowed coat the young bridegroom doth kneel;  
He has not even boots of his own,  
The handsome lad thinking of pleasure alone.  
And on his arm leaning, with golden hair,  
And eyes as bright as the sunlight fair,  
The prettiest maid in the land comes now, —  
Marie, joy throned on her snowy brow.  
What care these young hearts for pasture or plough?  
Each other they have, and that is enow. —  
Five years have passed by, and four children small  
Long-legged Madam Stork has brought and let fall.  
The mother sits late in the night at her toil, —  
Her husband too often from work doth recoil;



For howe'er they may strive, with e'en the best will,  
Not always they manage their hunger to still.  
The husband grows peevish ; abroad he doth roam ;  
The crying children for bread ask at home.  
Marie for strangers her needle plies ;  
The old witch Trouble to her side hies :  
She looks around with malignant eyes,  
And to find some cause of discord tries.  
The husband comes from a wild carouse,  
Stagg'ring at midnight to his house :  
A spider's web would his rage now excite ;  
His hand Marie's toil with a blow doth requite.  
The aim was true ; another stroke fell ;  
Happiness founded on love — farewell !  
The old witch Trouble laughs in her sleeve,  
And steals away through the mists of eve.  
Who wails so sadly, while bright stars shine ?  
Alas ! Marie, sweet little Marie mine !

## A PUBLIC DANCE.

**M**IDST a crowd disorderly  
Walked a dreamer, angels seeking :  
Then in sorrow turned away,  
While men ribald oaths were shrieking.

Sadly then his prophet glance,  
Soulless void so vacant scanning,  
Vainly sought to find a trace  
Where God's breath a spark was fanning.

Vapor all! He strove to slip,  
From the bestial throng escaping,  
Through the gate. A woman sat  
Midst the press, her pleasure taking.

Vulgar sensuality  
From her saucy glances gazes,  
As, with many a coarse jest,  
Her cheap oranges she praises ;

From the goblet of sweet wine  
Often secretly she 's tasting,  
And her scarlet lips to kiss  
All who 'll pay, to give she 's hasting.

But what's clinging to her breast?  
Under dirty rags for cover,  
Like the golden sunlight falls  
Her child's curls her bosom over.

Downward, upward, and beside  
Waves of sin and shame are meeting :  
See how pure and free from stain,  
In this child, God thee is greeting !

On the brow so lily fair  
Sweet innocence doth peace impress,  
Such as only saints above  
Heaven's blue star-strewn vault can bless.

Slowly now its eyes unclose,  
Wondrous azure depths unfolding :  
Bend thou lower, then thou canst  
Gaze, bliss most divine beholding.

Smiles not a pure Paradise  
Midst these pastimes base, infernal?  
Where no cherubim prevents  
Sating thy soul with joys eternal.

Pool of mire is ne'er so deep  
Sunbeam cannot reach with kisses ;  
Never is there wilderness  
Which every green oasis misses.

## A POEM OF SPRING.

**H**E comes with breezes blowing,  
O'er hills and valleys showing  
His sunny, beaming face.  
Who'er should seek to question  
Why? Answer he would have none,  
Save : Fool, love ever keeps his place.

With manners sweet and smiling  
The earth he kisses, wiling  
To open her dark eyes.  
Love, from thy couch arising,  
Robes on in any guise fling, —  
Our marriage-day dawns in the skies !

Himself doth bring the silken  
Robe and glittering gems, then  
For bridal dowry there ;  
Mid gay jests and caresses,  
Wreath of white roses presses  
On her long locks of silken hair.

Then calls he : Up ! make ready !  
Let music sound and all vie,  
Led by gay Madam Lark !

In the elder, nightingale  
For a solo will not fail,  
    And give each melting note due mark.

Come, come, lads ! leaping, springing,  
Wedding gifts hither bringing,  
    To glad my lovely bride !  
Swiftly then little elf-hands  
Drag forth bright silver ribbons,  
    With diamonds thickly strewn, in pride.

Clear tapers' flame now up-pours,  
From thousand hearts of flowers,  
    Which fragrant honey bear ;  
The notes of sweet bells ringing  
Through all the world are swinging,  
    And smoke of incense fills the air.

The banners green are glimmering,  
And precious stones are shimmering,  
    On ev'ry smallest bough ;  
The flowers and the grasses  
Grateful pray'rs repeat, when passes  
    The stripling Spring with radiant brow.

The Lord himself is blessing  
The nuptial bond. Joy, pressing  
    On, sweeps o'er all the land,  
Upon the wedding morning  
Grief and care give no warning —  
    With wedlock they come hand in hand.

ONCE FARED I FORTH INTO THE  
WORLD.

ONCE fared I forth the evil world into,  
A child in heart and mind, still pure and blame-  
less ;

Beside me from my home no angel flew,  
To guard me lest I sin with purpose aimless.  
Surrounded by the Tempter's hordes I slipped  
And fell. Alas ! how vain was all my praying,  
With pangs how keen anguish my poor soul gripped,  
When sin me to the very dust was weighing !

Oh, evil days ! full oft do I recall  
How I was shunned and scornfully derided ;  
What contumely and sneers were heaped by all, —  
No one with peace or comfort to me glided.  
How sorely my sad heart my guilt did rue,  
While friends and foes alike away were turning,  
And every hour to my lips anew  
The cup of wormwood pressed, mid jeers and  
spurning !

Not e'en one mortal gave me pity mild ;  
My father's heart seemed unto stone congealing ;  
Even my mother did condemn her child ;  
My life was wholly crushed, no hope revealing.

Then came a message which my full heart fired :  
Arise ! cast off the snares around thee twining !  
Although to doom thee all the world conspired,  
Thy God will lead thee where His sun is shining.

Then fared I forth into the world again,  
My heart and all my limbs for conflict steeling ;  
No kind farewell or hand-clasp soothed my pain, —  
My eyes were lowered, their hot tears concealing.  
The sin committed I have now atoned,  
Can meet the gaze of God and man unbending ;  
And those who once on me so sharply frowned  
Now smiling come, their ready hands extending.

Free is my glance, joyous as spring my heart ;  
My laughing lips of many things are prating ;  
In every youthful jest I play my part ;  
No grief to sickly love I 'm dedicating.  
But deep within my breast there is one scar  
Which will ache on till I in death am lying, —  
The thought that those who so self-righteous are  
The child attacked, stoning and crucifying.

## THE LUNCHEON.

MID tempest's roar and the rain's white foam  
My little boy from his school came home,  
Breathlessly calling outside the door :  
" Mother ! some bread, my hunger 's sore ! "

" What ! did you eat all your knapsack contained ? "  
In truth not even a mouthful remained.  
" Two slices of bread, an apple so red, —  
Yet hungry as though you had not been fed ?

" Dear me, my boy ! did it taste so good ? "  
" Yes," said he, softly. With school-book he stood,  
His eyes on the page : he knows that he lies.  
Suddenly truth conquers ev'ry disguise.

His hand on mine with caressing touch lies ;  
He gazes at me with questioning eyes :  
" Oh, mother, don't scold ! my lunch I gave  
To a poor little boy — no food did he have ;

" Nothing to eat for six whole weeks long ;  
His father is dead, his mother not strong ;  
And so to the beggar I gave my mite.  
Now, tell me quick, was it wrong or right ? "



With tears the fair boy to my heart I caught :  
" My child, you have done just as you ought ;  
For know he only our Father can love  
Whose heart the poor with pity doth move.

" And shouldst thou in life e'er wander, my son,  
God will thy footsteps guide from His throne ;  
While the bread thou didst give to the starving boy,  
To efface all thy faults He will one day employ."

## LITTLE BERNHARD.

SITTING, one fair, bright spring morning,  
On my house's threshold idly,  
Gazing rapturously toward heaven,  
While the sunbeam's gold glowed widely,

Comes a woman toward me shuffling,  
Dark her face with care and sorrow,  
Lightly a boy baby nestles  
In the crook of her lean elbow.

"Why, where found you this fine fellow?  
Good dame, let me see him, prithee ;  
Such bright glances round him throwing,  
Yet no strength for walking hath he ?"

"'T is the child of my poor Lena ;  
She from Herr Count's service creeping,  
When deserted by the noble,  
Now in grass-grown grave lies sleeping.

"He nor father has nor mother ;  
Starve we both must, I well foreknow.  
Such a burden when one 's aged  
Brings a sea of care and sorrow.

“ To the keen winds I expose him,  
From the cold protect him, never,  
Hoping that he 'll be death's victim ;  
But he lives on, ever, ever ! ”

Then she grasps the little creature,  
Like a bundle roughly shaking ;  
But he lifts his lips for kisses,  
Into shouts and laughter breaking.

While aloft his arms he tosses,  
Showing how tall he is growing.  
Twitching strangely are the dame's eyes,  
Tear-drops from their lids are flowing.

Now once more, with heavy sighing,  
Burden on her back she 's raising,  
While amid her woe and hatred  
Still the goddess Love is gazing.

## THE LAST LETTER.

**N**OW the address" — words from her wan lips  
 slipping, —  
 A woman, ill, and very sorely tried.  
 "First just a little of the potion sipping  
 I'll take, to give me strength my pen to guide.  
 With effort I have from my bed arisen ;  
 My heart is throbbing rapidly and wild ;  
 But mother-love no sickness can imprison.  
 Once more I'll write to my own darling child."

With pen in hand they found her prostrate lying,  
 The letter, undirected, by her side, —  
 Maternal love, though to the last defying,  
 Vanquished by death, with want and woe allied.  
 Sleep calmly, loyal heart, by angels tended,  
 Who thee have lulled to the eternal sleep ;  
 They thy unfinished letter now have ended,  
 With diamond in thy child's heart written deep.

**LYRICS OF LOVE.**



## LYRICS OF LOVE.

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### THY KISS.

**T**HE kiss which rested on thy lips  
For mine own I have captured ;  
Whatever haps I care not now !  
I sing like bird enraptured.

To whom the gods their beaker give  
Should make no long delaying,  
Or they fair fortune's glass might break,  
Their holy wrath displaying.

E'en should death's icy form now lie  
Beside me, my couch sharing,  
The lips which once to thine were pressed  
Will greet him, bright smiles wearing.

## MY PART THOU HAST AYE TAKEN.

**M**Y part thou hast aye taken,  
E'en when all from me turned ;  
When even my own mother  
Her poor child coldly spurned.

Deserted and forsaken,  
I wandered through the night, —  
A leaf whirled by the tempest,  
But not lost from thy sight.

The darts of scorn were pouring  
On my defenceless head ;  
Contempt was never ending ;  
Thy trust in me ne'er fled.

By this one thought of comfort  
The path to peace I found.  
May blessings, my good angel,  
Forever thee surround !



PASSED BY.

“ I ’VE borne so much already,”  
    A little flow’ret moans ;  
“ So oft rough hands have pelted  
    My head with sand and stones !

“ Oft, too, have footsteps heavy  
    Caused me such anguish keen,  
It seemed for long, long hours  
    Destroyed my life had been !

“ But when, your way pursuing,  
    You calmly passed me by,  
All pain that I have suffered  
    The pangs you dealt outvie ! ”

## OH, TORTURE NOT MY SOUL!

OH, do not torture thus my soul,  
Because, so calm and still,  
Even beneath thy sunlike kiss  
It opes not at thy will.

For love is a peculiar thing,  
Oft unawares may come ;  
Who seeks it on far mountain peaks  
May find it 'neath sea foam.

Oh, do not torture thus my soul,  
To blossom leave it free ;  
Perchance, beneath the flood of rain,  
'T is dreaming now of thee.

MY LOYAL LOVE.

THE nightingale 's sighing  
Mid elder leaves,  
Coquetting and toying  
With soft spring breeze.  
He flew to the rose,  
His love to prove :  
To me ope thy chalice,  
My loyal love.

Beside garden hedge stood  
Two children fair ;  
They talked of a parting  
To meet elsewhere.  
Weep not, little maiden,  
I 'll fears disprove ;  
On earth thou 'lt be ever  
My loyal love !

Up rises the lily  
From azure lake,  
With yearning ascending  
The moon to seek.

With silvery pencil  
He writes above :  
" For me live thou and die,  
My loyal love ! "

Long, long, stood I pond'ring,  
Silent, alone ;  
A rustling from fragrant  
Woodlands was blown.  
Yet though louder growing,  
No thief did move.  
His arms close, close hold me,  
My loyal love !

WHY I WEEP.

THOU askest why I 'm weeping?  
From me hast thou ne'er known  
Why, tryst in moonlight keeping,  
The nightingale makes moan?

She gazes at its brightness,  
Her breast with yearning swells;  
Within that rippling lightness  
Of silv'ry waves joy dwells.

When all the flow'rs are blooming,  
So spectral and so fair,  
In love's sweet pangs consuming,  
She fain would perish there.

She loves him ; yet all vainly  
Her singing doth prolong,  
The tears for all life's mis'ry  
Outpouring in a song !

?

**W**HAT is it here within my breast  
Keeps springing, rushing, flowing?  
The sounds both grief and joy suggest,  
Like palms in soft winds blowing.

'T is like the lark's exultant strain  
In blue spring heavens soaring,  
And organ tones in holy fane  
Through Christmas incense pouring.

It is a jubilant accord  
Of harmonies most fair ;  
It is — now I have found the word —  
Love's melodies so rare.

**AH, BIND MY HANDS.**

**A**H, bind my outstretched hands, I pray,  
With heavy fetters chaining,  
Or they might else on my breast lay  
A loved head, rest attaining.

And wall up, too, this heart of mine,  
In closest dungeon keeping ;  
Already through the windows shine  
Love's bright flames upward leaping.

Oh, make me deaf ! Oh, make me blind !  
No glimpse of joy receiving !  
'T is hard for the forsaken child  
To bear her sore heart's grieving.

## THOU.

AH, wouldst thou e'en once at me gaze,  
Thy eyes their spell swift weaving,  
With joyful courage I would raise  
Life's burdens, no more grieving.

If thou wouldst grant me but one kiss,  
Into the sea's depths diving,  
The fairest pearl in its abyss  
I'd bring thee, from it riving.

Could gift of all my songs avail  
To aid thy love in bringing,  
I'd perish like the nightingale  
Who dies amid her singing.



I HAVE LOVED.

I HAVE drunk deep of the flaming  
Sun's all-consuming glow ;  
I've lain absorbed in dreaming  
'Neath the moonbeams silv'ry flow.

On tempestuous winds, wild roaring,  
Over all the world I've sped,  
And, heaven's blue vault exploring,  
The stars have my playmates made.

The songs elves and nixies were singing  
Reached me in notes sweet and clear,  
And clouds, their soft hues mingling  
In roseate tints, floated near.

Then joined moon and sun in the asking :  
Was aught more fair where I roved ?  
I answered, in joy's rapture basking,  
" Yes, yes ! I have loved, have loved ! "

## AH, HAD I SEEN THEE SOONER !

AH, had I thee but sooner seen,  
Though e'en for one brief hour,  
That happy moment would I bless  
While dying lips had pow'r !

Ah, had I thee but sooner loved,  
Thou pure light of my soul !  
I'd envy not the fate of those  
Whom angel hosts enroll.

Ah, had I thee but sooner loved,  
Although in dreamland free,  
My hope's fair blossoms would not hang  
All withered on Life's tree !

## THUS IT IS.

ONCE unto me a rose thou gavest, —  
Meseems to-day again I take  
The bud ; and as a sharp thorn pierced me,  
You trembling asked : “ Oh, does it ache ? ”

You took your kerchief, *that* wound binding,  
'T was white and soft as fair snowflake ;  
I laughed away your childlike terror,  
And only said : “ It does not ache.”

But when you bruised my heart so sorely,  
I longed my kind all to forsake,  
Like stricken deer, you never thought of  
Asking the question : “ Does it ache ? ”

## THE SOUND OF THE BELL.

**M**Y dear child, canst thou recall  
How, as we said sad farewell,  
Clearly through the evening air  
Came the sound of vesper bell?

Not one word did we exchange,  
Only, hands still closer linking,  
Waited there all breathlessly  
Till died the notes, in silence sinking.

Let this thought a warning bear,  
With mem'ry of that hour blending ;  
And, parted by the world's gay throng,  
Godward our steps be ever tending.

WEEP NOT, FOR I LOVE THEE!

AT dawn of ev'ry morning  
The red sun smiles in glee,  
The dewy earth consoling :  
" Weep not, for I love thee ! "

'Neath waves, from home far distant,  
Some one sleeps quietly ;  
A nixie his cheek stroketh :  
" Weep not, for I love thee ! "

The butterfly doth hover  
The rose above, with plea  
Of ardent love caressing :  
" Weep not, for I love thee ! "

But thou and I, we only,  
Lack courage to feel free ;  
We say not, save while dreaming :  
" Weep not, for I love thee ! "

## MEMENTO MORI.

**O**H, could I but once more have gazed into  
Thy hazel eyes, which, like the flame eternal,  
The worn and weary soul doth penetrate !  
From distant childhood's days  
Still echoes in mine ear  
Tones of thy voice so sweet,  
With which thou so oft didst greet  
Me in the twilight hour,  
When, with their secret fibres,  
My thoughts and all my dreaming  
To thee clung !  
When thou didst press my hand so warmly,  
With all the ardor of thy heart,  
How woke in mine the joyous dawning  
Presentiment of some great future bliss !  
Then Fate thee summoned forth into Life's whirlpool.  
With joy didst thou obey ;  
Its fullest draught of pleasure  
Didst quaff, and in the golden wealth of Fortune  
Only too soon forgotten  
Was vow, which, weeping, thou in  
Parting mad'st.  
For, ah ! full soon didst thou another flow'r  
Cherish thy heart within,

Exulting sang to her the self-same  
Songs which my own still, peaceful chamber  
To holy temple erst transformed.  
Upon thy knees she sat, from thy white  
Brow the raven silky locks so gently stroking,  
As I so oft had done in former  
Years, when, of thy woes to me complaining,  
With kisses sweet the words  
I fain would speak from my lips taking.  
Could I have seen thee only once again,  
As thou, by joy encompassed,  
Standing on Fame's proud heights,  
All sudden sank the night of death into !  
Within Love's arms thou wilt sleep on forever.  
Unboding wert thou, like a victor  
Who, on his home's dear threshold  
Stricken by death, falls prone.  
How many tears have flowed  
To mourn thy death untimely,  
How thy deserted love her hands in grief has wrung,  
Are things I cannot know.  
I can but pray in morning, noonday, evening :  
Oh, could I but once more into thine eyes have  
gazed !





**VOICES OF REVERENCE.**



## VOICES OF REVERENCE.

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### TO THE EMPRESS.

**G**OD bless thee, German Empress fair !  
God bless thee, noble as thy state !  
Thou know'st the flow'ret growing where  
Thy native meadows thee await ;  
The hue of thine own eyes it wears,  
Forget-me-not the name it bears, —  
Of love and faith the emblem.

To-day by thousands we do bring  
And at thy feet its bloom present ;  
Scorn not our humble offering,  
The nation's richest ornament.  
To God the Lord for thee to-day,  
Our crown's most radiant star, we pray, —  
Thy people's kind, good mother !

May God bless thy anointed head,  
Each hour to thee His favor show ;  
May diadem ne'er press like lead,  
To bruise and chafe thy royal brow.  
If days of sorrow thou must bear,  
Remember, each heart-throb to share  
Thy people stand beside thee !

CARMEN SYLVA.

NOT even once have I looked on thy face ;  
Yet when all cloudless beams the sky's blue  
space,  
I think as deep, as pure, serene, and clear,  
Thine eyes may be as this fair azure sphere.

When earth in all her pomp of bloom beguiles,  
And from each flower-cup an angel smiles,  
When breath of love through all the world goes forth,  
I think e'en thus bewitching is thy mouth.

All beauty which the heav'n and earth enfold,  
I could, O noble Queen, in thee behold !  
In very joy and rapture I must weep,  
Because the earth and heaven in thee tryst keep.

## TO KARL STIELER.

## I.

**H**OW in thy sweet songs ringing  
 My own heart's tones I hear !  
 Around me ever clinging,  
 Familiar and so dear.

There sounds the same emotion,  
 There the same pang once more ;  
 A burning smart and balsam  
 For heart so sick and sore.

Thy lyre now is silent ;  
 Thy lips, beneath death's spell,  
 Have long been hushed ; but present  
 In mem'ry dost thou dwell.

When ice-bonds Spring has riven,  
 Unto the lark I say :  
 "Hath not Karl Stieler given  
 Thee one more roundelay?"

## II.

Not once in life did I e'er meet thy glance, —  
I, who devoutly listened to thy song :  
When hither borne by wand'ring breeze of chance,  
Methought I heard one of the angel throng.

In all thy melodies thou hast inwoven  
A quiv'ring anguish, like my own grief bleeding :  
Bewailest happiness, but ashes proven :  
The joy whose loss I weep, no comfort heeding.

Yet came the Muse for all thy wounds balm bringing,  
Which from thy songful lips doth freely pour ;  
To me no angel that redemption off'ring :  
I mute remain ; my pain will ne'er be o'er !

## III.

Full oft I've gained refreshment, when weary was my  
soul  
Of wand'rings long and hot, from thy song like waters  
cool ;  
Full often hath it soothed my heart-throbs swift and  
wild,  
Like day of tempest followed by evening soft and  
mild.

As God once in the desert Israel manna gave,  
 Thy treasured songs I garnered for Life's sweet bread  
     to have ;  
 Throughout the world thick scattered, like precious  
     pearls they lie,  
 Each one hath stirred my pulses till my heart with joy  
     throbb'd high.

Thy teaching made me patient amid all cark and care ;  
 I learned to love my fellows, rejoice in all things  
     fair ;  
 From off my soul thou liftedst the gloomy thrall of  
     pain :  
 The blessings thou hast given to tell I strive in vain.

But now, alas! thy lyre's chords are shattered all,  
     I know ;  
 Around thy grass-grown grave-mound cool evening  
     breezes blow ;  
 The night is softly falling, — hot tears bedim my  
     sight.  
 Sweet be thy rest and peaceful ; may earth on thee  
     lie light.

## IV.

“ Alas that thou must die ! ” ye all exclaim,  
 When any youthful heart has ceased its beating ;  
 Yet ye yourselves in culling do the same,  
 And choose the blossoms perfume still secreting.



No doubt the mother-bush doth moan and weep,  
As at each sharp cut anguish keen she 's bearing ;  
But the soft night-breeze bringeth comfort deep :  
“ Some human heart thy fair child now is wearing.”

Then neither weep ye when God claims this son,  
Patient whate'er the Father now requireth ;  
He needed him to deck His heav'nly throne,  
And with the ripe ears flowers, too, desireth.

## TO MY REVERED TEACHER,

PRECENTOR KERNER, OF LENGWETHEN, ON HIS  
SEVENTY-SIXTH BIRTHDAY.

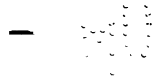
AH, let me too, among the children ling'ring  
Who all have gathered round thy seat to-day,  
Express the wishes my full heart is bringing,  
For Heaven's blessings on thee warmly pray.  
With candle-light the school-room's brightly gleaming,  
All honor on thy natal day to pour ;  
Fain would I once more enter it, in seeming  
Returned to scenes sacred in days of yore.

There stands the bench, ne'er from my mem'ry  
banished ;  
Thou cam'st to me, thy hand caressed my hair.  
Oh, dear delight, once mine, but long since vanished,  
When I the gaze of thy clear eyes could share !  
When thou didst lead to learning's fair green meadows,  
And gave to drink of thy own spirit's light,  
Though love unto thy soul was joy o'erflowing,  
With thy life-duty thou didst it unite.

How oft thou "Little chatterbox" hast called me,  
When my low whisper thy repose disturbed !  
But though my ready, nimble tongue oft galled thee,  
Thou didst not silence, only gravely curbed.  
For, lo ! a chatterbox I still continue, —  
And now my voice to the wide world imparts  
The news of great and noble love we all knew,  
Which thou hast scattered in a thousand hearts.

No doubt long since thou hast from thy book stricken  
My name, and yellow doubtless is the page ;  
But never has my heart from thee turned, even  
When life did all my time and thoughts engage.  
The days of childhood and thy face were shining  
Before me like a star in black night's van,  
The magic splendors of its rays combining  
My spirit's fire into a blaze to fan.

And now farewell ! Before thee humbly kneeling,  
Thy blessing I implore, Friend kind and wise :  
Though love for me a thousand hearts were feeling,  
Thy blessing still would be my highest prize.  
In thought with gratitude thy hands I 'm kissing,  
Bedewing them with tears of purest love.  
God grant, until thee from this life dismissing,  
Thy hours all happy, never sad may prove !



**MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.**



## MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

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### I WOULD BE THE SUN.

SUN, the sun, I fain would be,  
Not the moon with stars coquetting,  
From each stone by sorcery  
Red and sweet May-roses getting.

Lips of flame I fain would press  
On the icy souls of mortals,  
Till the world with eagerness  
Sought for wedlock churches' portals.

And amid this sea of fire,  
Sacred waves of pure love seething,  
Upward borne, would I desire  
Slowly, softly, to cease breathing.

## PAST.

THE days of youth passed swiftly by  
Almost ere I was 'ware ;  
My breast has heaved with many a sigh,  
I've grieved o'er many a care.  
But glow of spring or winter's snow,  
Falsehood or fealty,  
Exultant joy or bitter woe,  
Are now the same to me !

Not even one green twig of hope  
My pilgrim staff grows on ;  
The hand of Fate did gently lop  
Its blossoms, one by one.  
No doubt my tears then fell like rain,  
Half broken was my heart ;  
But now what care I for the pain ?  
In naught have I a part !

All dark and drear now dawns the day  
And cold the north-wind blows,  
I urge my life-boat on its way,  
Though tempests wild oppose.



Though I were whelmed the tide beneath,  
No cry upon the blast  
Would warning give of my last breath,  
And all would then be past.

So let the world go as it will,  
And make not thou much moan ;  
My heart, keep thyself calm and still,  
Nor in despair lie prone !  
Like foam from tossing wave-crest torn,  
Winter will flit like May ;  
To narrow chamber thou 'lt be borne, —  
And all be past for aye.

## BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT.

**A** LITTLE heart to judgment-seat was brought,  
 Because no longer Duty's mandate owning ;  
 Its dark eyes gazed with anxious boding fraught  
 Into Fate's face, black-veiled, and doubtless frowning.  
 Beside her Duty stood, of giant form,  
 With eyes lack-lustre, from which tears were 'scaping ;  
 The tireless worker held within her arm  
 A bunch of iron rods, for pastime shaping :  
 "What didst thou lack," Fate's thunder tones began,  
 ' "To win the greatest joy in Life's awarding ?  
 To lift thy soul to heaven is Duty's plan,  
 Thy steps the while from all temptations guarding ;  
 In hope and faith will bloom to fullest beauty —  
 E'en as the stake the flower's stalk doth stay —  
 The heart which is forever leal to duty,  
 Nor, like the flower unbound, in each wind sway !"  
 At words so stern the poor heart shudders, bleeds ;  
 With quiv'ring lips she strove to check her weeping :  
 "Ah, grant me joy," with anguish keen she pleads,  
 "One moment, only *one*, life's pleasures reaping !  
 I'm always shiv'ring in the scanty dress  
 Which Duty made. Alas ! I cannot wear it,

It is too tight, and causes sore distress ;  
Yet I dare don no other, so must bear it.  
See'st thou how beautiful its dye, and fresh ?  
With my own blood she hath it lately colored ;  
Each bitter word cut deep into my flesh,  
There thou canst aye behold her maxims' record.  
Like barren desert is her dreary face,  
Her scourge upon my hands she lays not lightly,  
Upon my brow a crown of thorns doth place  
Which pierce, though I my head turn e'er so slightly.  
On my robe's hem she fetters hangs which seem  
Too heavy for my feet to carry farther ;  
Free am I only in night's deepest dream, —  
Then joy's rose-ladder mount we two together ;  
The palm-grove greets me with its rustling low,  
And melody of harps draws me to dances  
Of happy mortals, pleasure once I know,  
And, as her child, joy's draught my soul entrances.  
Once only let me see with open eyes  
What dreams in hues of fainter lustre offer,  
Once only sip the draught divine that lies  
In cups the fairies to each fair bride proffer ;  
Only once let me cool my burning breast  
In surges sweet of love's sea ever flowing ;  
Once only let me feel in all its zest  
Joy's kiss upon my lips with fervor glowing, —  
My soul's salvation take, I'll give it thee,  
Remain an outcast throughout all the future ;  
Ope once the door of happiness to me,  
Then crush me 'neath thy foot's unfeeling pressure !”

And, weeping bitterly, the heart fell prone :  
    "Change thou thy stern intent, cruel Fate ! " crying,  
Clasping meanwhile its weak arms round the throne, —  
    "Have mercy on the heart for pity sighing !"  
Fate waved her hand : "So be it." A breeze here  
    Swept o'er the steps, with incense sweet entralling ;  
In tones of warning from the church tow'r near  
    The vesper bells softly to prayer are calling.  
In silence Duty doth at once obey,  
    With holy zeal her pallid cheeks are flushing.  
A shriek rings shrilly through the room : "Oh, stay !"  
    The heart cries, "With you I'll pray too !" and  
    rushing  
Forward to the stern form, sinks on its breast :  
    " Oh, fairy realm of happiness, farewell ! " —  
Closer upon her brow the thorns she pressed, —  
    " With this fair, cruel sister I will dwell ! "

THROUGH THE FIELD I WANDERED  
DREAMING.

THROUGH the field I wandered dreaming,  
All alone was I ;  
Roses on my cheeks were gleaming,  
Stained by sunset sky.

Here and there a bird was singing,  
Flow'rs hung their heads ;  
Like bright pearls the dew-drops clinging  
Rested on their lids.

With the sunset's glories waning,  
Pallid my cheeks grew ;  
Breezes, their melody sustaining,  
Bell notes to me blew.

"Gone forever ! gone forever !"  
Called their peal to me ;  
"Song of birds, rose-cheeks, can never  
More your portion be !"

Died the sweet tones, softly blending,  
Sunset's fires were spent ;  
Homeward then my footsteps bending  
Wearily I went.

In my heart one wish is present,  
Ne'er to slumber won ;  
Though all other chords were silent,  
It will still sound on.

This from sanctifying fires  
Strong and pure arose ;  
Not until it rest desires,  
I 'll seek death's repose.

TO A YOUNG GIRL.

WHERE to its rest the sun is hasting,  
A little rosy cloud still floats,  
Like Youth's last dream on fair cheeks casting  
A glow which happy thoughts denotes.

The bright days swiftly passed, conveying  
Their fairy scents and bird-songs clear  
To where joy's golden scales were swaying,  
And sunk, like sun when night draws near.

The little cloud will soon be soaring,  
If leal, once more in sunshine bright ;  
But who, thy happiness restoring,  
Poor maid, will give thee back its light ?

## A QUESTION.

“CAN’T the child yet walk alone?”  
I hear where people gather,  
“Is it always falling prone,  
Can’t it say ‘Dear father’?”  
See the happy mother smile,  
In her child’s eyes reading  
That within but a brief while  
Its steps will need no leading.

Thus have I questioned my heart :  
“Canst thou not yet gather  
Strength to bear thy sorrow’s smart?  
Canst thou not say, ‘Father’?”  
Upward gaze with look elate  
Where the stars are shining,  
And thou ’lt bear thy bitter fate  
Smiling, not repining !”



## FAREWELL.

**M**Y pilgrim staff is close at hand,  
My bundle too is tied,  
And all who near my heart do stand  
With me will still abide.  
My wife, my child, my mother dear,  
Will all remain with me ;  
So gladly I'll set forth from here,  
For green banks of the Spree.

Within thy walls, O ancient house,  
Both joy and grief I've known ;  
Kind fate with flowers hath decked my brows,  
And many favors shown.  
Yet still to wander I am fain,  
Elsewhere I long to dwell ;  
Thy parting kiss I feel with pain, —  
Beloved home, farewell !

How sadly, budding chestnut-tree,  
Thou seem'st at me to gaze ;  
Upon thy lashes I can see  
Tears shine in the sun's rays.

A faithful guardian thou hast been,  
Though snows or petals fell ;  
Hast made my heart with hope grow green, —  
Beloved tree, farewell !

No more shall I, O much loved wood,  
Within thy shade repose,  
While o'er me in a blissful flood  
Of dreams Time's current flows.  
But listen, comrade, true of faith,  
And brown deer, too, I tell :  
May blessings rest in ev'ry path !  
Beloved wood, farewell !

O best of fathers, here unto  
Thy sacred grave I come,  
And with eyes raised to heaven's blue  
Take leave of thee and home.  
My lips are quiv'ring, hot tears run  
As grief my heart doth swell ;  
I feel that thou dost bless thy son, —  
Beloved grave, farewell !

We'll onward move, one hand-clasp more,  
O friends so true and tried !  
Our bond of love will twine far o'er  
Both mount and valley wide.  
On, on, the distance beckoning  
Like fairy form we see !  
Who knows what that bright smile may bring  
On green banks of the Spree ?

NOT IN THE GLOOMY LAP OF EARTH.

NOT in the gloomy lap of earth,  
To ashes dull consumed,  
Nor in the narrow house of planks,  
Would I e'er be entombed.

But when at night the shining stars  
Say, "Come!" mysteriously,  
Wide will I stretch my arms and plunge  
Deep, deep into the sea.

The lips of nixies, lilies chaste,  
Will kiss my eyelids close,  
And waves will gently bear me  
Unto my last repose.

For mourners I shall have the fish  
Which in the waters dwell,  
And distant surges' thund'ring tones  
Will toll my fun'ral knell.

The water-lilies fetters soft  
Will bind o'er hands and feet,  
And for my robe the moon will weave  
A silver winding-sheet.

With stars above and stars below,  
I 'll sink deep in the sea ;  
Then from the flames of earthly pain  
My heart will aye be free.

OH, MOTHER DEAR!

“**N**AUGHT can with breeze of Spring compare, —  
That wooing, soft, caressing air.”

So say we oft, and drink its wine,  
Rejoicing in the bright sunshine.  
Yet something softer, well I know,  
Than wind of May or water's flow,  
Far softer e'en than silken band, —  
It is a loving mother's hand.

When flames the brilliant evening star,  
Glad eyes behold the radiance far,  
And think, while gazing at its light,  
No suns can pour forth beams more bright.  
Yet fairer radiance I know,  
Stars shining with a steadfast glow,  
Which consolation aye supplies, —  
It is a loving mother's eyes.

Along Life's path thou 'lt often rest,  
To fasten flowers on thy breast  
Of fragrant scent, hues blue and red :  
The morrow finds them withered, dead.

One flower alone is ever true,  
Its perfume ever gives anew ;  
The same in joy, or mid pain's smart, —  
It is a loving mother's heart.

Oh, mother's eye ! oh, mother's hand !  
Whoe'er these blessings can command,  
Along Life's swaying plank will aye  
Press steadfast on in the right way.  
If sets what seemed joy's sun to be,  
Unto thy mother thou canst flee ;  
Thou 'lt ne'er be poor nor quite alone,  
Whilst thou a mother call'st thine own !

**WHILE THOU WERT SITTING SADLY.**

**W**HILE thou wert sitting sadly grieving,  
The grave and death thy only thought,  
Thou didst not see the angels weaving  
A new bright dawn, with fair hopes wrought.

Thou didst not see that they had woven  
A linen web so soft and fair,  
Which, shaped by God, bandage hath proven  
That thou, to cool thy wounds, mayst wear.

God grant that once more on thee beaming  
The sun in radiance may appear,  
And o'er thy heart, in brightness gleaming,  
The star of peace shine full and clear!

## IN THE WATER.

AH, not in forest, nor moorlands sun-lighted,  
Lay me to rest when from clay disunited ;  
Nor, step in rank and file aye keeping,  
Will I march on to my long sleeping.  
In waves, in the waves, mid their cool, soft flow,  
Ah, lower me down : I shall rest there, I know.

Not e'en a flower I need of your giving,  
I 'll have in death nothing denied to me living ;  
Nor singing, nor praying, nor church-bells ringing,  
Need ye come to my soul as off 'ring bringing :  
The waves surging high 'll be my funeral knell, —  
In waves, in the waves, there shall I rest well.

No one for me will here be sore grieving,  
Below mid the fishes fond kisses receiving,  
With nixies in songs their fond love expressing,  
While my rigid limbs so softly caressing ;  
Forever cooled my heart's passionate glow, —  
In waves, in the waves, I shall rest there, I know.



And when the Trump of Doom its blast is sending,  
I need not toil, rocks and turf o'er me rending ;  
But while the water's arms are gently raising  
Me, join at once in songs of thanks and praising.  
In waves, in the waves, mid their cool, soft flow,  
Oh, lower me down! I shall rest there, I know.

## THE SKIFF.

WITH low clanking, a chain 's holding  
Firm the lightly modelled boat ;  
While this sheltered spot 's enfolding  
Thee, thou canst securely float.

Here art thou not safely guarded,  
Howe'er fierce the tempest blows ?  
Tears and troubles all discarded,  
Naught disturbs thy calm repose.

Heed not snowy water-lilies,  
Nor the nixies, one and all ;  
They but tempt with wiles and sorc'ries,  
Luring down to sudden fall.

But the boat with soft, sad plashing  
Sighs unto the yellow sand ;  
Firmly fastened, yet still dashing,  
Her light breast 'gainst the steep strand.

Former liberty I 'm craving,  
Weighs thy chain too heavily ;  
Fain would I, my light limbs laving,  
Plunge them deep in azure sea.

Though the tempest struck me, flinging  
Thousand fragments in its glee,  
My loose planks would join in singing  
With the nixies : " We are free ! "

## RETALIATION.

NO one 'mong children good me named,  
Or thought of meeting,  
I liked the waters clear to stir  
With sharp rods beating.

The deeper in the element  
My swift strokes pushing,  
The louder from my childish lips  
Glad shouts came rushing.

Now I am lashed and beaten by  
Life's education :  
Can there perchance in Nature be  
Retaliation ?

It may be so ; yet for one fault  
No one shall blame me.  
I silent bear my woe ; the tide  
Shall never shame me.

**THE SONG OF MY LITTLE LAD.**

**F**ULL many songs forth I've been sending,  
Of joy exultant or deep woe ;  
Ere died the last, with silence blending,  
I felt a fresh poetic throe ;  
But as the others far transcending,  
All are this of my lad commending.

My son, my darling boy, with flowing  
Fair locks of thick and silken hair, —  
Ah, surely there 's no other showing  
Eyes, which can with thy stars compare !  
No one hath lips more brightly glowing :  
Yes, yes, how handsome my lad 's growing !

His laugh so gayly rings while playing,  
In my heart waking echoes oft,  
As, boyish impulses obeying,  
Jests tease his brown-skinned sister oft.  
Like snow-wreaths 'neath the March sun staying,  
It melts the grief on my soul weighing.

Full oft into his chamber stealing,  
When the wee elf has gone to sleep,  
I watch, while joy and fear both feeling,  
The flush his rosy cheeks still keep,  
And see the child's " Our Father " sealing  
Chaste lips, their curves the words revealing.

My son, my boy, may Fate thee bringing  
What to thy mother is denied,  
Aid thee thy flight to summits winging,  
Where but the eagle dares abide !  
Mayst thou, with silv'ry notes clear ringing,  
Laurel and myrtle win by singing !

Then will I my own lyre lower,  
And listen only to thy tone ;  
The world to wound will have no power,  
Avenged shall I be through my son.  
Whoe'er the son with bay doth dower,  
Honors his mother in that hour.

**MY BOY.**

**T**HE sons of many other mothers  
Have pink and white cheeks just as fair,  
And wealth of gold and brown locks waving ;  
But none can with my boy compare !  
Oft in the distance with his comrades  
I see him coming, while afar,  
Among the whole group shining radiant  
As when from gray clouds gleams a star !

When merry songs in neighb'ring woodlands  
Ring forth like sweet bells, pure and clear,  
I hear but one mid all the voices, —  
My son's alone doth reach my ear !  
And when a ball in happy play-time  
Flies upward to the very roof,  
I know that my own boy's hand flung it, —  
Of his young strength a joyous proof !

When fifteen more brief years have fled,  
The vision ye will see with me,  
As slender as a green young fir-trunk  
He stands beneath the apple-tree !

E'en now his bright, clear eyes uplifted  
The radiant sunshine strive to bear :  
Yes, there are sons of other mothers,  
But none can with my boy compare !



## TO MY DAUGHTER.

**F**AIN would I see thee silken garments wearing,  
Mid braided locks bright flashing jewels bearing,  
A golden bracelet on thy arm secure :  
Forgive me, dearest child, I am too poor.

Now gladly would I, to thy banquet going,  
Pour richest wine from silver goblet flowing,  
At night with purple wrap thee warmly o'er :  
Forgive me, dearest child, I am too poor.

I nothing have except my love to give thee ;  
From it a little warm shawl I will weave thee ;  
Entwining with it blessings manifold,  
And prayers that God thee safe from ill will hold.

That He from all grief's storms thee ever guarding,  
To deck thy breast love's roses fair awarding,  
May feed and give thee drink from mercy's store :  
This is my wish, dear child ; I have naught more.

## BEAUTIFUL EYES.

## I.

**E'**EN as the wand'rer for the forest's shadow  
Doth sadly yearn,  
When naught save deserts bare, no tree nor meadow,  
Can he discern ;

E'en as the convict in his dungeon lying  
The night doth greet,  
When, on dream pinions, joy and sunshine flying  
Make his woe sweet, —

So in thine eyes' soft, shadow-cool recesses  
My worn heart lies,  
Till, freed from burdens of grief's sore distresses,  
It heav'nward flies !

## II.

Earnest, mystic, wondrous past ken,  
Turn ye not, dark eyes, away !  
Be my cradle, be my heaven,  
And cool grave of grief, I pray.

For your mystic depths aye yearning  
Ceaseless seeks my soul its bliss,  
Peace and happiness discerning  
Only in your dark abyss.

## III.

Oh, eye that with such magic flashes,  
Tell me, what dost thou dream,  
When on thy long and silken lashes  
Tear-drops like diamonds gleam?

Perchance 't is of the tender flower  
Which for thy sake hath bloomed,  
And forth its chaste, pure soul did pour  
To be in thee entombed.

Lov'st thou the lily white and slender  
Which in thy depths doth live,  
And for whose growth, with care so tender,  
Dews precious thou dost give?

## IV.

Although thine eyes are fathomless,  
I fain would gaze therein ;  
The flow'rets with such tempting stress  
Lure me, my heart to win.

I lower bend, and gazing stay ;  
Still my glance fixed I keep,  
While Innocence beside the way  
For her lost child doth weep.

## V.

When I to gaze in thine eyes dare,  
The world to me looks doubly fair ;

When bright and cheerful is my mind,  
I think that every heart is kind ;

Forget all cares that haunt my way,  
Nay, e'en the coming Judgment Day.

Thine eye my life-fount surely hath ;  
It calms my heart and cools my wrath.

Oh, do not trembling from me shrink,  
Permit my soul thy gaze to drink !

Let not thy lashes from me quite  
Conceal what is my life's sweet light ;

And when within my grave I lie,  
Look down on me with loving eye !

The light of thy gaze on me pour,  
It is more dear than wreath or flow'r.

The joys of heaven I would not share,  
If thine eyes did not greet me there !

## NIGHT.

HOW colorless the sky and dreary,  
Which wore by day a smile so bright !  
The clouds, as if of tears aweary,  
Like beggars mute sweep through the night.

Their little heads the flowers hang sleeping ;  
Not e'en one leaf moves on the tree ;  
Only the waves, to my feet creeping,  
Exchange soft kisses dreamily.

The forest stands in deepest silence,  
The birds have long since ceased to sing ;  
But faintly, from the ghostly distance,  
The breeze a bell's low note doth bring.

Upon the moss in worship blissful  
I kneel ; my tears like dew-drops fall.  
Oh, holy nights, calm, starless, peaceful,  
How fervently I love ye all !

## OPEN THY HEART.

**A**DMIT into thy silent breast  
The notes of but one bird,  
And instantly thy soul will join  
In jubilant accord.

The perfume of a single flow'r  
Inhale like breath of God,  
And in the garden of thy heart  
A thousand buds will nod.

Toward one star in heaven's expanse  
Direct thy spirit's flight,  
And thou wilt have in the wide world,  
My child, enough delight.

OH, LOVE THOU TOO!

**T**HE waves are all whisp'ring,  
In moonlight clear,  
The sweetest of dance-tunes  
For nixies' ear ;  
They laugh and they beckon,  
Each other woo,  
And say with their plashing :  
" Oh, love thou too ! "

In blossoming linden,  
Each year, a pair  
Of doves to their nestlings  
Show tender care ;  
They're billing and cooing,  
Like lovers true,  
While twittering softly :  
" Oh, love thou too ! "

How surely the heaven  
The earth holds dear,  
E'en though it looks sometimes  
So dull and drear !

Yet through the gray clouds breaks  
The sun anew,  
And laughingly greets with :  
“ Oh, love thou too ! ”

Wouldst know the real meaning  
Which love doth fold ?  
Thou must the Redeemer's  
Image behold :  
“ My life thee I 've given, —  
What wilt thou do ?  
Oh, heart, restless throbbing,  
Now love thou too ! ”



## TO MY ROSE.

**C**OME to my heart, rose lightly swaying  
 Upon thy bending, slender stem,  
 Lest leafless autumn, thee dismaying,  
 Should seize thy curled locks, rending them !  
 Upon my heart securely resting  
 From tempest, storm, and every ill,  
 Each morn with kisses to thee hasting,  
 Love, with new life, each pulse will thrill !

I know a wondrous lovely Eden  
 Far from the rude world's din and roar,  
 Where all the charming flower-children  
 Talk love, — love only, evermore ;  
 Where nightingales exulting, wailing,  
 Of love's joys and love's sorrows sing, —  
 Oh, trust my strength of arm unfailing,  
 Thee there to dwell for aye 't will bring !

Oh, do not shake thy fragrant tresses !  
 Thy beauty, too, soon will have fled,  
 And winter 'll strew, as on he presses,  
 His snowflakes white upon thy head.

Dost thou not feel the chill of autumn?  
Thy sisters wither 'neath its dart.  
Thou fragile rose on swaying stalk, come !  
Thy fate decide : Come to my heart !

**I AM FREEZING.**

**M**ID sunshine's glow I freezing stand  
While flow'rs bloom brilliantly,  
Since once a cold and cruel hand  
A draught hath given me.

I'm freezing by the fireside's blaze ;  
Though hot flames fiercely rolled,  
And I should ever at them gaze,  
Still ever I'd be cold.

E'en though with sun and fire's glow  
The highest heavens were red,  
My blood, now ice, would never flow :  
I freeze — my heart is dead !

## I GREET THEE.

OH, kindred soul, I give thee greeting,  
E'en as we greet the sunshine bright,  
Which, after winter's night, uncloses  
The springtide days of warmth and light !

As 'neath Spring's kisses, warm and tender,  
The flowers their bright faces show,  
So thou within my heart dost conjure  
The first green blade of hope to grow.

And from that heart, to new life kindled,  
Doth softly rise an earnest prayer,  
That God this sunbeam ever guarding  
Will its light always to me spare.

Whatever tempests may assail me,  
My trusting heart will ne'er despair :  
Oh, kindred soul, I give thee greeting !  
God bless thee, my own sunlight fair !

## DISAPPOINTED.

**A** GLEAMING pearl lay on the strand,  
It seemed a beauteous one ;  
Yet when I grasped it in my hand,  
'T was but a pebble-stone.

I plucked a crimson rose so fair,  
Fragrant as a spring morn :  
When on my breast I sought to wear  
The flow'r, 't was but a thorn.

A heart, too, once was sent to me, —  
I thought it glowed with love ;  
But, bound to mine eternally,  
No ice could colder prove.

## NO SONG CAN I SUCCEED IN SINGING.

**N**O song can I succeed in singing,  
How light the task in days of yore ;  
Are now my pinions weary, winging  
Their flight woe's wide realm to explore ?  
Have all the blazing torches vanished,  
Does no bloom on the flowers remain ?  
As if the heavy rods Fate brandished  
Had from my wreath its last leaf ta'en ?

No, no ! Cheer up, my spirit mounting  
Up, up, toward the sunshine move !  
Strike thou thy lyre, thy griefs ne'er counting,  
And steadfast fix thine eyes above !  
As from the bonds of winter leaping,  
The spring doth force a current free,  
Thy song pour forth, and, firmly keeping  
Thy flag close clasped, a victor be.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.

UNTIL we meet again ! it hopeful rings,  
When friendly hands are clasped, a farewell taking.  
Oh, words of comfort, which love's tribute brings,  
No others cheer like these, the silence breaking.

Your palm-bough on all crosses waves aloft,  
Ye dry the tears upon our lashes clust'ring,  
Ye render thorn crowns light and velvet soft,  
O'er cliffs and seas your golden bridges thrusting.

And should the words the scorner says prove true,  
Should death my soul seize, too, conquest complet-  
ing,  
The promised morn ne'er dawn, life bringing new, —  
Oh, let me still believe in future meeting !

## STARS THE SKY ARE FILLING.

STARS the sky are filling !  
What a radiant light !  
Deep within my heart reigns  
Black and stormy night.

Silv'ry dew-drops glitter,  
Strewn o'er wood and wold ;  
My wan cheeks are furrowed  
Where sad tears have rolled.

Everywhere peace reigneth,  
Sacred, deepest peace ;  
But in my brain weary  
Conflicts never cease.

Throbbing, seething, burning,  
Till consumed am I,  
And from the dead ashes  
Swift my soul will fly.



WHAT I LOVE.

A SKY always cloudless  
Would not be fair ;  
It would kill the flow'rets  
Everywhere !  
The ground would soon harden  
In sunshine's glow,  
And then the fair flowers  
Could never grow.

For happiness endless  
I would not yearn,  
No bridge to sleep leading  
Could I discern.  
E'en though I should empty  
The cup of joy,  
Still I should be thirsting,  
Ne'er would it cloy.

I love the cloud curtain,  
Which veils the blue ;  
Unto earth it bringeth  
The cooling dew.

The keen pain and anguish  
Of grief I love ;  
They bear our hearts unto  
The heights above.

PAIN YOU 'VE GIVEN.

**P**AIN you 've given, bitter pain,  
Words forever ringing,  
In my ears their sad refrain  
Grief for error bringing.

Words cannot, though sweet and kind,  
Compensation offer ;  
Courage yet I do not find  
Thee my hand to proffer.

Thousand tongues can tell the tale,  
Keen remorse revealing.  
Can tears to blot my fault avail,  
'Neath my eyelids stealing?

## WOULD I WERE DEAD !

WOULD I were dead ! How sweet must sleep be,  
 lying,  
 Thus from all earthly sorrows far removed ;  
 Like mariner from sheltered harbor eying  
 With quiet gaze the sea's tempestuous flood,  
 While to safe haven Fate his ship hath led —  
 Would I were dead !

Would I were dead ! What dreams of wondrous  
 beauty  
 Must visit those in the cool house below ;  
 When linden-trees, low rustling, roused to duty,  
 No more would I to life, so barren, go,  
 Nor grief nor care could reach my narrow bed —  
 Would I were dead !

Would I were dead ! Both hate and love past feeling,  
 The pangs all past which mankind to me gave.  
 My glowing heart, now into dust congealing,  
 Mouldering slowly in the peaceful grave,  
 The flow'rs all withered which once fragrance shed —  
 Would I were dead !

Would I were dead ! The evening shades come gliding,  
I 've seen enough delusions here below,  
The birds' sweet songs in silence are subsiding,  
An icy wind doth on my temples blow.  
Long since hath faded joy's last sunset red —  
Would I were dead !

## VANISHED.

**D**IED away, in silence endless,  
All my lyre's rich tones so sweet ;  
Never will their music cheering  
More my soul, so weary, greet.

Spent and dry the spring now lieth,  
Which so oft my heart did cool —  
When deep grief, with iron finger,  
To its depths hath stirred the pool.

Gone forever have my sun's rays,  
Which with light so brilliant shone ;  
Never in this life another  
Will be sent me for mine own !

HUSH.

**H**USH, hush !  
Hot weeping spurn,  
Some day tears  
To ice will turn.

Soon, soon  
Thou wilt be cool,  
Ere thou art 'ware,  
Thou 'lt reach the goal.

Far, far  
Will pain depart,  
Thy bones dust be,  
Dust, too, thy heart !

## THE DELUSION OF GRANDEUR.

**I**N dreams I once — I cannot now help smiling —  
Believed myself a princess wondrous fair.  
My feet were silken clad, and, time beguiling,  
I donned the garments rich the royal wear.  
Around my palace walls were Hussars standing,  
Each man wore buttons of the purest gold ;  
While I, court fool to minister commanding,  
All, subject to my lightest wish, controlled.

Why had I to such lofty height ere mounted ?  
By no cause could I this strange dream explain ;  
To poverty from earliest childhood wonted,  
Ne'er had I quaffed the foam of joy's champagne.  
And then I ripped the pillow's striped cover —  
'T was filled with shining plumage of the cock :  
All strain to solve the puzzle now was over,  
And why in dreams grandeur and joy me mock !



## AUTUMN.

ONCE again, o'er all the land,  
Autumn's golden rain is sweeping ;  
Wearied by the summer's heat,  
Many heads seek rest in sleeping.

For the last time dying flowers  
Fragrance breathe from blossoms pouring ;  
Where the rustling grain once waved,  
Smoke from shepherds' fires is soaring.

Softly, with no joyous notes,  
Birds of passage southward winging,  
With light stroke of pinions now  
Kiss their nests, — a farewell flinging.

Ah, the hour when Nature draws  
Her last breath, to ice congealing,  
Never can the eye discern, —  
To the soul 't is known by feeling.

Thus shall we all also fare :  
When has passed the summer's singing,  
And the joys of life have fled,  
Cometh Death to all rest bringing.

In the tempest and in want,  
Or the sunshine and joy knowing,  
Softly under hand of God  
Our souls will pass, to silence going.

## POETIC TRIFLES.

WHERE happiness, still, calm, and pure,  
 Doth like a flow'r unfold,  
 Let ev'ry hand rude touch abjure,  
 And say, "May God thee hold!"

---

THE tears which sorrowful yearning sheds  
 Are all united in pearly beads ;  
 In every flower's cup they're found  
 Which lonely grows in the wayside ground.

---

IN peace let the dead sleep.  
 And scourge thou them not ;  
 To God's judgment seat  
 Thou, too, wilt be brought.

---

WHEN Life's smoothly flowing,  
 No obstacles e'er showing,  
 Then wise and virtuous are we,  
 And plume ourselves so strong to be.

Yet only those are counted  
True men who have surmounted  
Life's perils and its dangers,  
To sin remaining strangers.

---

MAN tries himself to rate in vain,  
The masses this right always holding, —  
Whoe'er will not suffer their enfolding  
Must ever at the door remain.

---

ALTHOUGH the rose beside the way  
Half choked by weeds is seen,  
From every blossom that unfolds  
Looks forth the flowers' queen.

Howe'er may flaunt, mid blossoms bright,  
The nettle her display,  
She still remains an ugly weed  
Forever and for aye.

---

FATE has toward you a kind intent,  
And you may trust, her sentence waiting ;  
'T is only when you grasp the reins  
That she begins her bitter hating.

## IN AN ALBUM.

**M**ANY have written on this book's fair pages,  
I see that almost every one is full ;  
With wishes for all joy to thee, love's gages,  
The tribute of each friend here you may cull.

While one doth warn you in life's darkest regions  
Of storm and stress an upright man to be,  
Another hopes that God His angel legions  
With sunshine and rose-scents may send to thee.

'T is well ; for all these things thou 'lt have occasion ;  
Both up and downward Life us leads in part ;  
But whether joy or grief should be thy portion,  
Forever keep, young friend, thy childlike heart.

If this thou hast, all things in one thus wedding,  
A heart that's pure will give pure lips and hand ;  
Each tear of sorrow thou 'lt some day be shedding  
God will arrange as pearls on thy life's band.

## SOME DAY.

**S**OME day this brain with thoughts that blaze and  
smoulder,  
Which oft hath pondered many an hour lone,  
In earth's dark breast, so bitter cold, will moulder,  
And every care will then be past and gone.

These hands of mine, which now are hotly burning,  
These feet of mine, which now so sorely ache,  
Will then at last, from all earth's labor turning,  
Soon find the time a long, long rest to take.

Yet still my heart, with all its ardor glowing,  
Will ne'er consumed to dust and ashes be ;  
Forever from it fresh love will be flowing,  
And like a star, belovèd, shine on thee !

THE VILLAGE HOSPITAL.

CLOSE by the churchyard, in narrow vale,  
Far, far from rich men's farms abundant,  
Illumed by the sun's last ray so pale,  
The village hospital we hail,  
Which walking corpses do tenant.

Well-nigh to earth doth the roof extend ;  
Light through dim windows is stealing ;  
When the larks' matin songs to heav'n ascend,  
From the chambers so close and narrow blend  
Such piteous tears and appealing.

And within — O Pity, hold e'en thy breath ! —  
The poorest of poor people here lie.  
In soul and in body sick unto death,  
Each in his heart's depths the same prayer hath :  
" Our Father, upon us have mercy."

Around, wherever the eye doth rest,  
Corruption, moans, suffering cureless :  
I thought myself no more on earth a guest,  
As to this dark gulf of woe I pressed, —  
A sea of tears, surging and shoreless.

The sun had set ; but as on I went,  
My way through the dark fields keeping,  
Close followed, where'er my steps I bent,  
The sufferers' sighs and sad lament :  
Long, long I could hear their weeping !



## FULL.

GRAVE by grave and cross by cross,  
Here are row upon row,  
Where, in my heart's garden wide,  
Flowers bright I oft strow.

But amid them lay one space,  
For a long time left free,  
Where, upon a golden bush,  
My dear love might throned be.

But to-day the tempest fierce  
Hath with chilling blast come.  
Tearless have I now borne forth  
Love unto its last home.

Tremble not, thou feeble hand,  
Coward heart upholding ;  
Firmly grasp the winding-sheet,  
Thy life's love enfolding !

Dig thou deep, — then will no ear  
Catch the low lamenting,  
Which might other sleepers rouse,  
Their repose preventing.

Slumber there, O love and joy !  
Hoot on, boding horned owl !  
Henceforth I shall shrink no more, —  
All the rows are now full.

## REFUGE.

**T**O Heav'n I've raised my cries appealing,  
To earth I've pleaded in despair, —  
Before the altar's steps, low kneeling,  
Have poured forth yearning, ardent prayer.

“Have pity,” cried I, the woods pacing,  
“And cool the pain of this fierce smart !”  
The cliff with slender arms embracing  
I clasped, mid weeping, to my heart.

Thus, my woe consolation mocking,  
From place to place I wandered on,  
Till in my chamber myself locking,  
Found comfort in God's word alone.

At last the lesson I am learning, —  
Grief hallows those who've its path trod ;  
And though joy's dead, past all returning,  
Know naught can part me from my God !

## THE LEAVES ARE FALLING.

THE leaves are falling, so soft and light,  
 The mocking wind has breathed on them its  
 blight ;

The bare, brown boughs are sadly mourning  
 The guests their faith to them thus spurning,  
 And all the summer fragrance and bloom  
 Finds in one chill November night its doom.  
 Oh, grief far beyond all measure !  
 It is the ever-unchanging tale, —  
 After May's roses comes winter's veil.  
 The leaves are falling — all's past, we wail.

The leaves are falling ! scarce true doth seem  
 That faded so soon my sunny dream ;  
 Command to part Fate's hand was signing,  
 Which we must bear without repining.  
 In vain did yearning long, long seek the way, —  
 All paths were effaced, the heavens were gray.  
 Oh, why so many tears weeping ?  
 They never the path to joy will show !  
 It sleeps far down in the cool house low ;  
 The leaves are falling ! all's o'er, we know.

**I HAVE SEEN.**

**I** 'VE seen the delicate golden-haired child  
Unto a crazy old fool chains uniting ;  
She gentle and soft as the spring breeze mild,  
And he a north wind, with his gray locks fighting.

The good and virtuous wife have I seen,  
On bed of fair flowers her body finding ;  
The blossoms o'er her dear form wove a screen,  
Which chains so young to ice and snow were binding.

Her every feature spoke of secret woe,  
Yet on her brow was purity still dreaming ;  
Thus frost doth often, e'en mid springtide glow,  
Kill in one night the rosebud brightest seeming.

The tears sprung burning hot to all our eyes,  
But mine from her pale lips could not be riven ;  
To me she seemed a lamb of sacrifice,  
Unto the yawning jaws of hell thus driven.

The gray-haired dolt, 't is true, wailed and tears shed,  
The while, in secret, groups of young girls watching,  
Whence he, perchance ere three short months had  
sped,  
Might have the joy of one more sweet flow'r snatching.

## THE MAID-SERVANT IN MOURNING.

THEY laugh at me because, a servant-maid,  
For him best loved I'm wearing mourning, —  
Because at night, when no one needs me,  
Weeping his death, I'm sleepless turning.

The many patches on my old black gown  
Occasion give for merry jesting ;  
What do I care for garments fine ?  
My heart my grief is manifesting.

They chide the slight trembling of my hand, —  
It moves less quickly, orders taking ;  
If they but knew how, far from her home,  
The poor deserted child's heart's aching.

They often lifted their dog in their laps,  
And his ails commiserated,  
While they laughed to scorn the woe in my soul  
By God Himself created.

## FREE.

I BEAR a joy, a lofty joy,  
Within my heart, oft aching ;  
No fear doth ever it alloy,  
When thoughts free flight are taking.

They flutter like the birds, while swings  
Their flight throughout earth gleaming,  
And bear upon their dainty wings  
The sweetest of all dreaming.

They mock at doors and bars and bolts,  
And all the blows Fate looses ;  
My merry little choir of thoughts  
Can love whate'er it chooses.

And though my feet through life are led  
Down poverty's bare pathway,  
My merry band of thoughts will tread  
The street of highest beauty.

## MY LIFE.

**A**LL my life long I've wandered on so sadly,  
For love and joy in childhood 'gan my quest,  
Like butterflies I saw them flit before me,  
Which now and then upon a flower rest ;  
They lured me on till evening shades came gliding,  
But when the mists rose to the mountain's brow,  
Downward they sank, within the blossoms' hiding,  
While my hand only grasped the thorny bough.

Lying too weary e'en to stir a finger,  
Prone on the turf, with the chill hoar-frost wet,  
Again the lovely creatures hover, linger,  
But none upon the flowers have settled yet.  
Higher they soar and higher, upward still, then  
Vanish forever from my tearful eyes ;  
Slowly the leaves fall from the churchyard linden,  
Whispering low : Joy dwells beyond the skies !



**A CHILD IS WEeping.**

**W**HAT can afflict the child thus weeping?  
It sounds so passionate and sad ;  
Who can a child in pain be keeping,  
Who yet no touch of care has had ?  
It sits there in the scorching sun,  
Upon the dusty road, alone.

The other little ones have all gone,  
Amid the green woods gayly range,  
Play in the pathways, moss and grass-grown,  
And kisses, jests, and talk exchange.  
Not e'en a single thought they send  
To this poor weeping child, their friend.

More and more angry grows the crying,  
Despair doth seize the little heart ;  
It grasps the stones in the road lying,  
And beats itself to feel the smart.  
Far into distance, back it peers,  
But nothing sees to soothe its tears.

Its temples throb, the sun is glowing,  
The little child so weary lies,  
Its tears are now more slowly flowing  
'Neath the red lids that veil its eyes.  
Its little head doth now droop quite,  
Its little mouth is still and white.

It sleeps — one more sob, yet another,  
Then calm, deep calm, the scene broods o'er —  
Calls from the woods doth echo transfer,  
But the poor child hears nothing more.  
However deep may be its grief,  
A child can weep itself to sleep.

## TO THE MOON.

**O**H, come, fair moonlight that I love,  
    Extending thy white hand,  
Aud weave o'er valley, river, grove,  
    Thy gleaming silver band.  
The nixies to the upper air  
    From house of crystal rise,  
And wash their long and silken hair  
    Where thy soft radiance lies.

Scarce canst thou with the sun's bright glance  
    In ardent love looks vie,  
Yet doth thy noble countenance  
    Rare beauty glorify.  
Each one deep in thine eyes to bask  
    Would gladly with thee bide,  
And all our hearts do closest mask  
    We can to thee confide.

Petitions thou dost ne'er reveal,  
    But, list'ning with a smile,  
From house to house doth gently steal,  
    And bring sweet rest the while.

Though we are sleeping, thou dost wake,  
In smallest room dost peer,  
And wrapped within thy mantle take  
Glad dreams the heart to cheer.

And so upon thee, moonlight pale,  
More than all else I doat ;  
Calm, pure, the sky through thou dost sail,  
As in a silver boat.  
And when draws near my life's last eve,  
And earthly strife is o'er,  
Within thy skiff, friend, me receive  
And bear to Heav'n's shore.

**MY HEART.**

**M**Y heart is strong as a sturdy oak,  
Its branches and boughs gnarled extending,  
On sunlit space aye fixed is its look,  
And it knows naught of bowing or bending.

A ship so proud with streamers and mast,  
It sweeps through surges loud roaring,  
Yet nor rest nor peace can it find, till at last  
In home's haven it ceases exploring.

Too often my heart is like a flint,  
So cold, stiff, and senseless lying,  
But e'en one blow with the steel imprint,  
Bright sparks and flames round you 'll be flying.

Yet if the omnipotent light of love  
To subdue it hath all its strength given,  
'T will softer e'en than melting snow prove,  
Or oak by the lightning riven.

## FOUND.

**H**OW long, how long for thee I've sought,  
    Until now never finding !  
But since thy word hath comfort brought,  
    On my wound balm 't is binding.  
The fiery flush of joy's first thrill  
    Through all my being 's glowing ;  
My woe has fled, want, every ill,  
    My bliss full health bestowing.

My soul doth now no longer rove ;  
    Upon thy heart 't is resting,  
Sweeps proudly through thy sea of love,  
    Knows only mirth and jesting.  
Within thy arms it falls asleep,  
    A thousand kisses giving,  
Reflected in thine eyes so deep  
    As 't were in sunshine living.

My burning thirst is now appeased,  
    My boat in harbor 's lying ;  
In love's cloak wrapped, all suff'ring eased,  
    To sleep I 'm joyous flying.

Thou mine, I thine forevermore,  
What grief could torture me, when  
Of all my bliss the inmost core  
In thee is life, soul, heaven !

## IN THE FOREST.

**W**ITHIN the forest shades to live and die,  
Oh, fair fate sent !  
The flowers our bed, the soft green grass our grave  
And monument.

Bright dragon-flies gleam through the solemn dusk  
Like precious gems,  
And ivy twines about the lofty elms  
Its clasping stems.

The tree tops rustling in the evening breeze  
Sweet songs sing low,  
And from the lofty boughs the dew-drops wet  
Leafage below.

How blest to lie there shut in sweet repose,  
From sorrow deep,  
And with closed lids, enwrapped in happy dreams,  
Forever sleep !



## HOMELESS.

I LAY upon my mother's breast,  
In life, a single hour alone ;  
Ah, I should be divinely blest  
Could I but hear her voice's tone.  
But in the grave by Death's hand hurled,  
Her love for me in her heart bearing,  
She left me lonely in the world,  
The world of sorrow, pain, despairing.

My father blind, my mother dead,  
The joys of home lost evermore,  
When the child tears of longing shed,  
For folly scolded o'er and o'er,  
No doubt the beads that sparkling gleam  
Youth drained from Pleasure's cup o'erflowing,  
Yet my heart never ceased to dream  
Of happiness all radiant glowing.

E'en though I were the prodigal,  
And had my wealth with others squandered,  
I still would hear a sweet voice call  
And turn my steps repentant homeward,

Would fall before my father's feet,  
Then, humbly to my mother kneeling,  
My home again with rapture greet,  
Feeling their kiss my pardon sealing.

Now, like a leaf borne on the wind,  
Amid the world's dense concourse straying,  
There 's not a single soul I find  
For me, old bachelor, love displaying.  
Who 'll bring my sore heart comfort now?  
Why hath not Friendship my hands taken?  
Oh, Mother dear, why, why hast thou  
So early thy poor child forsaken?

## THOU AND I.

**T**HOU movest onward with drooping head,  
Thy hopeless eyes no joy perceiving ;  
But I walk with light, unfettered tread, —  
Of what avail is our grieving ?

'T is true that Fate hath forced us to part,  
That our plans are all unavailing ;  
Yet still, however the wound may smart,  
My eyes will sparkle, unquailing.

Erect, unbending, my head I 'll hold ;  
Not e'en for a false love will I sigh.  
All do not dig for diamonds and gold,  
E'en fragments can make some happy !

## FOR MY CHILD.

## I.

FOR thee, my child, oft I lie waking,  
For thy dear sake till late at night,  
To grant thy ev'ry wish plans making,  
To see thy bright eyes' laughing light.  
E'en though my feet are often weary,  
And my day's work is often hard,  
If but thy face comes to my mem'ry,  
No pain or grief do I regard.

Thank God ! that one within my keeping  
I have, who 'll share my joy and woe.  
Grow quickly, I shall soon be steeping  
My soul in thy youth's rosy glow.  
How closely I will watch and cherish,  
Protect thee, dear, from cold and wind,  
Patiently bearing every anguish,  
While I in thee a good child find.

Although my happiness is shattered,  
If but thy sun shines clear and fair,  
I will forget Time's snow-flakes scattered  
Too early whitening my hair. —

Rich gifts of heart and mind thy dower,  
And gentle as May breezes mild,  
Unfold thy petals, human flower :  
I pray for thee alone, my child.

II.

On pillows snow-white, in a narrow chest,  
Sleep now forever, my darling, rest,  
Little one, in God's keeping !  
Thine eyes thou hast closed for the long, endless  
dream,  
Peacefully slumb'ring, scarce real doth it seem,  
As I gaze at thee, weeping.

Dolls and all little books hither bring,  
Both loved far, far beyond anything,  
By my darling, now sleeping ;  
One more kiss, then lower the coffin,  
Deeper and deeper the dark grave in —  
Desolate by it I 'm weeping.

## PARTED.

**E**VEN though vales and mounts may sever,  
 And each all tears must shed alone,  
 Although in life we may meet never,  
 Yet shall we always be as one.  
 The mind a bridge is aye providing,  
 On which we two may often meet ;  
 I will not always Fate be chiding,  
 Because hope lacks fulfilment sweet.

An angel to and fro is flitting,  
 And will to thee my greeting bear,  
 Unto thy heart his words admitting,  
 May they for thy soul rest prepare !  
 And I, whene'er I feel thy greeting,  
 Will think myself in Paradise,  
 From which the world's cold, cruel dealing  
 Thrust me, and now return denies.

*One* sky above its dome is raising,  
 From which *one* sun doth shed its light ;  
 With doubting hearts we 're ever gazing  
 To *one* moon's disk, so silver bright.

The soft breeze strokes our cheeks, oft burning  
As if a messenger 't would be,  
It cools our ardent, hopeless yearning —  
But ever walk alone must we.

Though parted, bound by ties enduring,  
We always meet each other's eyes,  
And each, for other peace securing,  
Would die, like leaf whirled 'neath the skies.  
Be brave ; our souls from this husk freeing,  
Which parts us here, to our great woe,  
Soon each the other will be seeing  
Where immortality we know.

## AT PARTING.

**G**IVE me one more clasp of thy hand,  
Then let this be our parting !  
Why shouldst thou fan, with hatred's brand,  
The flames from my woe darting ?  
Thou hast no faith in my true love,  
Wert playing a game clever —  
In God's name go ; my sun above  
Thou wert, and wilt be ever.

In God's name ! And I hope this earth  
A truer heart may offer —  
Which will to light of faith give birth,  
Guard thee from turning scoffer.  
And when thou that true heart doth gain,  
Oh, send to me some message ;  
Then will the burden of my pain  
No more my sad soul ravage.



## TO A RICH MAN.

**A**RT thou, poor rich man, happiness pursuing?  
Then need'st thou only go into the street,  
And, from the homes of poverty there viewing,  
Gift of a child as precious pledge entreat.  
Think of the Saviour's earnest, ardent pleading,  
How fondly little children He caressed,  
For thee, too, He has suffered, mocked and bleeding,  
Oh, take His little lamb unto thy breast.

Not only food and drink and earthly off'ring  
Are things well pleasing in the Master's sight :  
Far better gifts there are, which cost us nothing ;  
Make these thy aim, and strive with all thy might !  
Give in the ocean, vast and never empty,  
Of love to this child e'en a single dip ;  
Else will the world to him be lone and dreary,  
And his soul ever thirst for fellowship.

In love do thou, a pair of small hands holding,  
Teach them to be of service to mankind,  
In love alone his heart to virtue moulding,  
In love the child a place in thy house find.

Then treasures infinite within thy borders  
Thou 'lt gain, and thy foes' power to seize mayst  
scorn,  
While with the fairest of victories' orders  
Thy God will then some day thy breast adorn.

TO MY DAUGHTER ON HER  
CONFIRMATION DAY.

MY child, be good !  
To *every one* whom thou in life art meeting,  
Extend thy hands with tender, loving greeting,  
Always rememb'ring he is of *Christ's* blood.  
My child, be good !

My child, be pure !  
Like dew, which ere by dust contaminated,  
At dawn for the young meads jewels created,  
Sun kissed, its sparkling doth like gems allure.  
My child, be pure !

My child, be true !  
Ne'er in thy soul let falsehood's stain come stealing ;  
Confess thy faults, no error e'er concealing ;  
Anguish it will avert, and peril, too.  
My child, be true !

My child, be mild !  
Though from a thousand rods blows should be raining,  
Submit with patience, bear without complaining ;  
Gaze at Our Saviour's image, so reviled.  
My child, be mild !

My child, be strong !  
Whene'er temptation 's from the right path luring,  
If faith thy hands with firm hold are securing,  
It will defend, as bark pith covers long.  
My child, be strong !

Child, be devout !  
Thou shouldst in worship mute be ever bending,  
That when the Father's voice His call is sending,  
At any hour, " I come, Lord ! " mayst cry out.  
Child, be devout !

MY HAPPINESS.

WHERE shall I take my love? I'm weary,  
Where rest obtain?  
The day was cold, the evening's dreary,  
No house I'll gain —  
In barren fields, through darkness pressing,  
No one is near;  
Where with my love I'm rest possessing  
Must not be here.

What shall I do with my love, weighing  
So heavily?  
Shall I it from the world conveying  
Sink in the sea?  
But then 't would sleep in depths receiving  
No sunshine fair;  
So I must therefore, my love leaving,  
Consign elsewhere.

Where then shall I with love be driven?  
To yonder hearth?  
Ay, there unto the greatest love is given  
Its righteous worth;

And as, from store of fagots feeding  
Piece after piece,  
For others' joys, not mine, aye pleading,  
Find happiness !

**AN AUTUMN NIGHT.**

**A**UTUMN night, in moonlight lying,  
Solemn, pallid, sacred night,  
Thy cool lips, so softly sighing,  
Summer's eyes shut with touch light.

Silver cloudlets, elfin veiling,  
Follow wave of thy white hand ;  
Thousand wishes, never failing,  
Bear they into dreams' fair land.

Peace proclaiming, peace aye bringing,  
Ent'ring ev'ry little room,  
Where'er anguish souls is wringing,  
Bearing healing, thou dost come.

Lost in dreams, by dreams led captive,  
Lean I weary at the door ;  
When wilt thou, night calm and pensive,  
Peace to me for aye restore ?

## THY PICTURE.

TO me thy picture's dearer far  
Than aught within earth's confines ;  
The sky has lost its brightest star  
Which now within thine eyes shines.

There's naught that in this world I love,  
More than those eyes, here glowing ;  
No deeper blue hath sky above,  
More peace no heav'n's bestowing.

Thy picture is so dear, so dear,  
More cherished every hour ;  
When night doth through the window peer,  
O'er my dreams rules its power.

Still every glance doth on thee wait,  
To guard from ill essaying ;  
When open springs dawn's roseate gate,  
Before it I am praying.

So dear thy pictured counterpart,  
Thy sweet soul's pureness keeping,  
That when I think how far thou art,  
Most bitter is my weeping.



TO THE SZESZUPPE.<sup>1</sup>

WAVES, where are ye going  
With crowns of foam?  
Your swift restless flowing  
Sweeps far from home.  
I watch ye in joyance  
Here flit and there ;  
Away in the distance  
Ye now must fare.

Here might ye be twining  
Fair rosebuds thrown,  
In struggle fierce joining  
Round moss-grown stone ;  
But where thy course farther  
Westward doth go,  
Thy shores thick reeds gather  
And lower grow.

Now murmur ye faintly  
O'er yellow sand  
Sad music, whose plaint we  
Ne'er understand.

<sup>1</sup> A river near the home of the poetess.

Low yearning tones creeping  
Sigh soft through the reeds, —  
Your song, amid weeping,  
For liberty pleads.

## TO MY ERICH.

JOIN not the ranks of poets, my son,  
Heed thou my warning !  
If the Muse's form seeks thee to snare,  
Turn from her, scorning.

If thou dost give her thy lips to kiss,  
Thou 'rt lost forever ;  
Fool among fools then rated to be  
Thou wilt cease never.

Into all depths of sorrow and joy  
Thou must make entry ;  
But ne'er will she ask, when thou wearied dost lie,  
If thou art hungry.

E'en as a Fata Morgana lures,  
Delusions bearing,  
Dying thou 'lt lift thy hands to her,  
Allegiance swearing.

And shouldst thou, scaling the steep, ascend,  
That sphere attaining,  
Through bone and marrow swiftly will fly  
Critics' spears raining.

If from thy brow thou dost tear the fair wreath,  
Thy prize examine,  
The garland of laurel thou 'st gained, my son,  
Tears and blood both twine.

## VINDICATION.

O H, say ye not always, the North-land is poor,  
In South-land alone bloom the roses,  
And softer is there each maid's arm to allure ;  
Whoe'er it embraces, his sorrow 't will cure,  
In such loving clasp it reposes.

Perchance all the stars there more brightly may shine,  
In nights balmy odors exhaling,  
Yet e'en though this radiance their eyes should en-  
shrine,  
We maids of the North to no envy 'll incline ;  
It gleams in our braids, never failing.

If clasp of our arms less tender doth prove,  
Round Germans, proud necks as it twines, these  
Our hearts will aye throb with a leal faith and love,  
Our hearts, whose fidelity naught e'er can move,  
Like hue of our evergreen pine-trees.

## THE BUTTERFLY.

A BUTTERFLY splendid  
Hovered, in autumn,  
Outside my window,  
Now up and now down.

Behind its glass panes  
Roses, still blooming,  
With smiling lips lured  
Poor lover coming.

He saw not the hoar-frost's  
Arrows so fatal ;  
He saw but the red glow  
On rose lips magical.

His struggles were futile  
Lips so sweet to gain ;  
His kisses fell only  
On cold window-pane.

At morning I found him  
Stiff, dead on the sill.  
Fool 's he who for kisses  
Out of reach strives still.

TO MY READERS.

**A**S guerdon for my songs, to me you've given  
This fresh and beautiful green laurel bough.  
With joy I've pressed it to my heart, and striven  
To voice the thanks which my soul's depths fill now.  
But would ye make my happiness o'erflowing,  
Give me the little flower which in each spot  
Of all our German soil is thickly growing ;  
It bears the simple name : " Forget me not."

## FIRST LOVE.

**L**OVE so fair in vernal beauty,  
Dim grow my eyes when on thee I brood ;  
Like a dove with plumage snowy,  
Which is driven through the wood.  
Thou art like matin bells which native breezes waft,  
Pure as first refreshing draught in Eden quaffed.

Fragrance of that blue flower wondrous,  
Which our God on His own bosom wears,  
Altar saint, to which the tim'rous  
Sinner eyes to lift ne'er dares,  
Stony hearts thou bring'st from out their cold repose ;  
Smiled away thou canst not be, as men suppose.

Ev'ry heart holds thee in memory,  
Star-besprinkled, tender flush of dawn,  
Though rich life from out its treas'ry  
Thousand radiant suns hath drawn.  
Ever unto us our fairest dream thou 'lt be,  
Flower that first bloomed upon our young life's tree.



THE LAST SONG.

A SONG of my creating,  
A wondrous song I'd sing,  
Which like the fragrant breeze of May  
O'er earth its flight would wing.  
From North to South, from East to West,  
A way break in a trice,  
And give to all mankind sweet rest,  
Joy, Peace, and Paradise.

Unto the sick and dying  
Sweet cordial it should bring,  
The sound of its soft pinion's stroke  
Still grief and suffering.  
Mid clank of arms and conflict hot  
Fan courage to a flame ;  
For woe men comprehended not  
Comfort it should proclaim.

But where'er sin is lurking  
With cruel serpent e'e,  
To hurricane swiftly rising,  
'T will sweep it in the sea.

On every chink in house of pain  
A cooling balm distil,  
The temple cleanse from ev'ry stain,  
And every want fulfil.

And if this song succeeded,  
Nor fame nor gold to gain  
I'd wish, but throw my lyre down  
And sing no other strain.  
Unto the pine woods stealing,  
Lay me for death's repose  
To no one e'er revealing  
Who did this song compose.

THE RETURN HOME.

MOTHER, once more set the bench by the hearth,  
The olden place now possessing,  
Sit by it there, and again let your hand  
Over my hair pass, with touch caressing.

In thy lap I fain my head would lay, —  
Place of rest, to sweet repose hushing !  
How far art thou, world, now, with all thy woe,  
Thy burdens with pressure crushing !

Kiss thou my forehead, 't is burning with pain ;  
The lips of no lass e'er has pressed it.  
Too sacred the place whereon thine did rest  
Profane touch hath never possessed it.

Now, mother dear, sing, oh, sing me to sleep ;  
Restore my lost faith by thy kindness.  
They've ta'en from me all things except thy love ;  
To rob me of that the world's powerless.

## TO LITERARY CRITICISM

## I.

**I**T lies in the dust, my fair jewel bright,  
I bore with such love in my bosom ;  
I hear how the throng in fierce taunts unite,  
The rattling scales sound an alarm.  
All things I most precious held are now crushed  
Though tears while creating them o'er them gushed,  
And while from my heart's depths tearing  
Them, thousand pangs I was bearing.

What God himself in my bosom hath placed  
With sacred inspiration's power,  
What like a child I have cherished, embraced,  
I must now see 'neath scourges cower !  
What hath pleased many a sensitive heart  
Is scattered now on the winds far apart,  
Like autumn leaves from the trees streaming, —  
My loving, my thinking, my dreaming.

Believe me, ye band so heartless and cold,  
I shall not die of my pain and grieving ;  
The wings ye'll ne'er break of the eagle bold, —  
At most but those of the crow so thieving.

My book is the sunshine eternally fair,  
Forth from my heart leaping like fountain in air.  
From it for all ages singing,  
To eternity my way winging.

## II.

Men, I pray ye, cease my peace disturbing !  
Wrong have I done to no one of ye all ;  
Grudge me not of my own thoughts the possession,  
Gift which to me from the Father did fall.

Would ye them rend in a thousand fragments,  
Drag them through mire, I will make no ado ;  
Fairer ones still in a trice will again rise  
From crystal house, which my soul shineth through.

Take what ye will ! But outside remaining,  
Break not the holy deep peace of the woods ;  
I yield ye all things — renown, love, and honor —  
Grant me but one, my woe deep as seas' floods !

## LOCK WHATSOEVER MOVES THEE.

**L**OCK whatsoever moves thee  
Within thy heart's close shrine,  
And give to God alone  
That little key of thine.

Discuss with Him alone  
Whatever may befall;  
He is the only friend  
Who understandeth all.

## WEARY.

WHAT aileth thee, O red rose blushing,  
That thou dost feel such sudden shame?  
Dost think of butterfly's love gushing,  
His splendid colors bright as flame  
He'll kiss the red lips of another fair;  
Thou'lt fade, death-stricken by despair.

The shimm'ring dragon-fly is sleeping,  
By gentle night-breeze lulled to rest;  
It dreams of sunshine, glad waves leaping,  
In flow'r leaf curled as in a nest.  
Sigh mid the shelt'ring reeds to murmur seems,  
I am so weary — amid its dreams.

I, too, am weary, — joyous would I  
My head lay down for my last rest.  
Could I persuade the clouds above me,  
How gladly I would homeward press,  
On their soft borders, which lightly gleam,  
So gently lulled to the endless dream!

## FATA MORGANA.

I SEE thee in the water clear,  
When from its depths doth rise  
Thy image, as an angel pure,  
And slays me in this guise.

Within my breast I see thee oft  
Upon an altar stand ;  
Before it lie in anguish wild,  
And death would fain command.

I see thee in the rose's pomp,  
In snow-white lily leaf ;  
'Gainst them my burning eyes I press,  
And weep out all my grief.

I see thy face in every star,  
In floating veil of mist ;  
In morning's dawn and sunset glow  
Thy semblance doth exist.

I see thee in the azure sky,  
Moonlight and sunshine hot ;  
I see thee in the hour of death,  
And yet — I see thee not.



**I HAPPINESS WOULD FAIN CALL MINE.**

**I** HAPPINESS would fain call mine ;  
I too, love's sunlight knowing,  
Would drink the pure, delicious wine  
From Life's great fountain flowing.  
My lips already pressed the glass,  
I seemed quite lost in dreaming,  
When, with shrill sound, it broke, alas !  
And all the drink divine did pass —  
For me aye wasted — streaming.

And happiness did once draw near,  
To me its head inclining ;  
Upon me fell one glance so dear,  
A friend my heart was shrining.  
But when the beautiful blue band  
I was to that heart clasping,  
'T was snatched swift by another's hand,  
Who wound it round his forehead, and  
Retained it for gaud grasping.

Now happy I'll not seek to be,  
My sorrow is far dearer ;  
Alone it never leaveth me,  
Ne'er passes, but draws nearer.

I know to none on earthly shore  
Is happiness full given,  
And therefore I will close my door,  
That hard-won peace from me no more  
By trespasser 'll be riven.

## AFTER YEARS.

**I**S this really my own roof-tree,  
My beloved parents' home?  
Joyous as of yore the swallows  
Darting out and in do come.  
Fragrance giving, strews the linden  
Perfumed blossoms on my hair,  
And, above, the azure heaven  
Laughs as erst in sunlight fair.

All things lie in self-same places,  
All things are just as of yore ;  
On the gable of the cottage  
Doves are cooing as before.  
Water from the pipe is flowing  
Thirsty wand'ers to relieve,  
And to flowers, blossoms, grass-blades  
Sacred Sunday peace doth cleave.

Yet to me all things seem altered,  
As by burden sore oppressed ;  
Closely do I clasp my kindred,  
Almost weeping, to my breast.

Yes, these are the self-same chambers,  
Fairyland of childhood's frame,  
These the old beloved meadows —  
I alone am not the same.

**I HAVE PRAYED.**

**T**HAT thou mightst happy be, I once did pray ;  
But now thou 'rt joy possessing,  
Meseems, amid the pangs which my heart slay,  
A thousand times from it the wish must stray,  
That grief again was thee oppressing.

'T is only when thou 'rt wretched that thou 'rt mine,  
Once more then I am praying.  
Now, when Love's golden sun doth on thee shine,  
And solitude on earth's no longer thine,  
My steps near thee can ne'er be straying.

## THE RINGING OF THE BELL.

**T**HE day was closing now, after its fierce contending ;  
The ringing of a bell with evening breeze was  
blending.

The soft tones seemed to utter comfort, grief beguiling,  
As if unto its load it was day reconciling.

My hand was very heavy ; lines which labor burrows  
Marked it, e'en as the plough the earth's green bosom  
furrows.

The bell drew it to prayer, with magic power grasping ;  
Alas ! long, long ago it forgot Christian clasping.

And as from the hard brass note after note was riven,  
As from the lips word after word appealed to Heaven,  
As from my weary eyes the burning tears were stealing,  
God's knock upon my heart His presence was revealing.

And slowly from within, like mists, all grief was  
drifting ;  
Devoutly once again my eyes to Heaven uplifting,  
Whence angel bands, with blessings, ever are descending  
To those before God's throne their heads in rev'rence  
bending.

The last note of the bell died in a happy Amen,  
The angel hosts have borne it on their wings beyond  
ken.  
And Amen, Amen rings from ev'ry cloud's red flushing.  
I thank thee, bell ! From my heart's depths my prayers  
are gushing.

## BY LOOKING IN THINE EYES I SEE.

**B**Y looking in thine eyes I see  
Thou hast been weeping sore  
Although thy lashes show no trace  
Of any tear-drops more.

Although from thy proud lips thy words  
Like precious pearls have rolled,  
And thou hast painted joy's bright hues  
In sunlight's tints of gold ;

Though thou dost hold thy curly head  
As if no weight it bore,  
By looking in thine eyes I see  
Thou hast been weeping sore.



**MY WISH.**

**W**HAT I would wish for is nor praise nor fame,  
E'en to the height of kingly thrones attaining ;  
Nor shall Love's silent sanctuary's flame  
Bind me, with links of roses softly chaining.

For Love, alas ! oft builds its house on sand,  
Its whispers sweet become a cry of anguish,  
It leaves a thorny robe within the hand —  
And praise and fame are but men's whims that vanish.

What I would wish for is a fair Spring day,  
On which my coffin should with earth be covered ;  
In azure air a lark's clear, joyous lay,  
While o'er my pall a butterfly light hovered.

No weeping or lamenting, no, oh, no !  
Ne'er would I wish to have such useless off'ring ;  
But as toward their homes the neighbors go,  
Let them think : Good was she we've been burying.

## OUR WEAKNESS.

**K**KNOWN are we women as the weaker sex,  
 The fact is true, and thus 't will aye remain.  
 Happy are we if, in earth's record book,  
 As faithful mothers we can write a name.  
 Man with brows decked with laurel may appear,  
 We find our joys within a narrow sphere.

Known are we women as the weaker sex,  
 We only weep the while men fiercely swear ;  
 And — if joy's balance wavers — ever seek  
 Our refuge, not in weapons, but in prayer.  
 We do but bless, though false to us men prove,  
 Ay, women's hearts are more than weak in love.

What will to man his strength of arm avail,  
 If woman points him not to virtue's goal?  
 Who 'll save him amid passion's storm and stress,  
 When o'er him all Life's surges fiercely roll?  
 Woman alone the powers of hell defies,  
 Because her greatness in her weakness lies.

LOST HAPPINESS.

WITH happiness its precious freight,  
Fair Fortune's barque swept by,  
Afar I saw its shining state,  
Its fairy majesty.

Its course the helmsman strove to stay,  
My pulses throbbed apace,  
My outstretched hands implored delay,  
Then — vacant was its place.

Farther, still farther o'er the tide,  
Swift rushing like the wind.  
And now the road I sit beside,  
Mine eyes tears almost blind.



# JOHANNA AMBROSIUS.

By HERMAN GRIMM.

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**T**HROUGH the newspapers, Prof. Karl Weiss-Schrattenthal, of Pressburg, became acquainted with the poems of a poor peasant woman who lives in a village of East Prussia. He entered into communication with her, and printed a number of her poems. The first edition of this collection appeared at Christmas, 1894; early in March, 1895, — in less than three months, that is, — the fourth edition was published.

Johanna Ambrosius is a laboring woman, who must work hard to keep the household from getting behind-hand. Her poems, which she writes only for her own solace, arouse my surprise, admiration, and hearty sympathy, by the depth of their insight and the power of their utterance.

Professor Schrattenthal's preface gives us further details concerning Johanna Ambrosius, whose real

name is Voigt, that of her parents being Ambrosius. It is unnecessary to repeat these details here. My interest is in the matter and form of her poems, in her poetic technique.

Her life and poems may aptly be compared with those of Ada Negri. Ada Negri was more capable of resistance, and became known earlier. So soon as we consider these two women historically, we must cease to speak compassionately of their misery. Both have completed their course from the depth to the height. Whence came their noble thoughts? One of the passages, which Karl Schrattenthal quotes from Johanna's letters, says: "When I write a song, I am so excited, so ravished from the world, that I seem to myself an utter stranger." This sensation overcomes us too when we read many of her verses. Strong, genuine feeling speaks in them, and gives these poems the rank of independent creations of the human mind. We say to ourselves: Here one for whom the world had no place has reached a planet of her own, in lucid heights, where she is sole monarch. One sweep of her wings bears the poetess aloft to this self-created new kingdom. Viewed thence, all the sorrow and ugliness of life assumes another form for her. Loss is changed to gain. The way in which Ada Negri and Johanna Ambrosius turn unendurable burdens into a sense of deliverance is so strangely alike in both that they seem to be daughters of one and the same mother. What dis-

tinguishes them are chance externals of nationality and position.

Ada Negri sprang from the restless mass of men who throng the factories. She experienced the sufferings which that kind of misery entails, from her earliest childhood. The roar and shriek and pound of machinery filled her ear. Johanna bowed her young back to work in the unchanging fields. Northern pine woods surround her village, never rustling, only sighing when the wind blows through their branches. The images and feelings of the moment are lent the force and vigor of something aggressively warlike by the impetuous power of the Italian. In Johanna Ambrosius greater intellectual power prevails, and the quiet strength of a German soul. Ada, with clenched fists, bursts straight through the thicket which surrounds her; Johanna, with weary feet, seeks a practicable path in the *selva oscura di nostra vita*. But both contrive to make their poems nestle in our memories, never to be banished thence.

Both women are filled with the spirit of the present. The most striking sign of this new spirit, which I have noted in later years as an element still penetrating the world, is the dislike, aye, the inability to lose myself in exploration of the human beings of previous centuries as I did in former years. All that precedes the beginning of this century has ceased to enthrall me, as if overcome by faintness. Nor am I

alone in this experience ; others too, in confidential conversation, have confessed the same of themselves. Of all which past centuries offer us, Christendom and its founder, Homer, Shakespeare, Raphael, and Goethe only seem to me unaffected by this blight. I sometimes feel as if I were transported to a new existence and had not taken along the necessary intellectual baggage, as if wholly altered conditions of life compelled a wholly new order of thoughts. For distance is no longer that which divides men. With sportive ease our thoughts traverse the circumference of the earth's surface, and fly from each individual to every other, be he where he may. The discovery and use of new forces of nature unite entire nations in unceasing mutual toil. New experiences, under the pressure of which our conception of all visible and invisible things changes in uninterrupted alternation, force upon us new modes of viewing the history of the evolution of humanity as well. We try to test the force embodied in great men by its pure power of illumination and action, and to understand and set it forth in their individual manifestation otherwise than as heretofore. How I labored thirty years ago to penetrate Voltaire and Frederick, Mirabeau and Napoleon, Lessing and Winckelmann for their own sakes ; and now they are important, and intelligible too, only in so far as they help to explain the present time. My intellectual labor is now concentrated on the



present. I understand it because it lives. Goethe himself is important to me now only in so far as he still lives in and for us, and the "young Goethe" in so far as he makes the "old Goethe" clear. Something in the intellectual atmosphere of the world must have changed, that the previous centuries now begin to pale and fade. In the lives of Ada Negri and Johanna Ambrosius I see embodied historical elements which require measurement and formulation. They grew up alone; they were of lowly station. They speak such pure speech. They are poor women; they do not hate those whose lot is more fortunate.

One of Johanna's last poems (January, 1895) is "My Last Song." Not one verse in this song which does not contain an insight. How beautifully the first three strophes introduce what the poetess calls "the whole world"! How clear all the images are to our eye! How they alternate! What contrasts they form, and how touchingly the last strophe reverts to the poet! This poem explains the nameless lays of popular poetry. How many pieces in the "Wonder Horn" may have originated with poor girls and women, and no one knows who invented them because no one was meant to know. In the preface to Jacob Grimm's book on German minstrelsy (which he wrote when he was twenty-six years old), he speaks of the women poets of old German ages. He says

of German minstrelsy : " I might, in a certain sense, say that this poetry was not the peculiar property of the poet. Among other things, it is plain that no poetry was ever more feminine than this, with its never-failing love of flowers, with its quiet beauty. Who can doubt that just such a world arose in the soul of the women of that day, and sounded a thousand such harmonies, more tender than any man ever sang? But it never occurred to them to speak out ; their life was their poetry and their aspiration." So, too, Johanna Ambrosius waited long ere she allowed her verses to be made public. They are the thoughts and feelings of a lonely girl and a lonely woman.

When I think of the romance which ruled the early part of our century, the present time seems to me like a flowery field of grain in comparison with an endless, silent garden full of gravestones. Lenau, Uhland, Rückert, Platen, and Heine too, tried to plant this graveyard so thick with flowers that it began to live. But when they animated the dead to speak, aye, to sing anew, their voices always sounded as if from the grave, and even the present seemed to descend, in order to speak from the depths. The frightful burden of this conception of the world has been taken from us by the present age. Humanity to-day obeys an unconquerable pressure to feel free regardless of history.

Platen was a slave to his distinction; Heine to a certain vanity, coupled with secret self-contempt; Byron, Lenau, Uhland, and Rückert cannot conceal their resignation, which oppresses them; the softly clanking chains which fate forged for each of them rattle and re-echo in their verses. The loftiness of their souls cannot free them from this slavery. Almost frantic efforts are made by those now living to escape from this ban. We catch the first sounds of the song of the new age in Petöfy's poetry. As Goethe once, so he too only wishes to give himself utterance and nothing more. So far as I may judge by translations the other Hungarian poets do not equal him by far. So, too, famous Poles, Russians, and French are mere historians compared to Petöfy. They did not poetize for themselves alone. They strove, openly or secretly, for recognition and appreciation. They stand full of self-consciousness amid admirers. How little Petöfy cared for this! He certainly demanded fame; but he surely cared not whence it reached him. His supreme sense of dominion injures nothing. He weeps and laughs in the face of the world. He was badly enough off. So soon as he begins to poetize, he sits upon the clouds, and the world lies at his feet. He summons death, but means to live. His most woful complaints breathe forth love of life.

Only one poet of the present equals him, and perhaps surpasses him, — Mistral, whose "Mireio" seems

to ring out from the lips of Homer. From Lamartine to Victor Hugo, no one knows the secret of this French Provençal race, of uttering happiness and unhappiness in the same joyous accents, of interweaving endless bliss and woe, as if there were nothing to choose between them. Petöfy, Mistral, Goethe, Shakespeare, and Homer sometimes seem to me the recurring embodiment of a single poet. This is the great primeval poet of mankind, who gives vent to his grief in words whose melody enchants him. Amidst the despair which almost breaks his heart, he is utterly unable to grieve. An unknown feeling of happiness in mere existence never leaves him. This is the secret of the poetry of Ada Negri and Johanna Ambrosius. As soon as they begin to poetize, that which afflicts them becomes a fountain of joy. Johanna's life is set before us, from her youth down to the latest day; her verse contains a compensation for the worst experiences. They are formulæ for turning lumps of coal into pure gold. Who could venture to call this poor peasant, in her poverty almost beyond our comprehension, poor? We are the paupers, and she bestows upon us alms. The wounds from which her blood flows, as Shakespeare says, become lips to whisper to her sweet comfort. Read the verses on the death of a child, in whose coffin she laid the doll and the little book which it loved best; so perfect in their simplicity that they must comfort

the poet herself. So, too, the poems to her daughter and to her son, which overflow with almost wanton bliss. This woman, with her hand roughened by work, strikes the chords of the human heart, as if they were touched by fairy fingers. And how are we to explain this almost incomprehensible literary discretion? She offers us none but mature, perfectly formed fruits.

Does not the poem called "Lost Happiness" sound as if taken from "The Boy's Wonder Horn"?<sup>1</sup> It seems to come from the self-same source where Walter von der Vogelweide found his "Alas that all my years are spent,"<sup>2</sup> and Goethe his "On yonder mountain top."<sup>3</sup> I seem to know the melody of it, as if I had heard it sung long ages since. Not a verse without a picture. This poem and the "Last Song," mentioned above, are chosen quite at haphazard. As in every field where flowers grow, so, too, in Johanna's book of songs, modest and conspicuous blossoms grow side by side. But all are flowers; and if they grew in a distant field, they are none the less sweet. Where such flowers bloom, in East Germany, the soil is sacred in which its roots are planted; and we need not heed whether it be a child or its sick mother that plucks it. There are none of Johanna's poems which do not reveal the free spirit of a lofty but lonely

<sup>1</sup> A famous collection of old German popular poetry.

<sup>2</sup> "Ach, wie sind verschwunden alle meine Jahre."

<sup>3</sup> "Da droben auf jenem Berge."

nature, which has recognized, after long inward strife though it be, the cruel blows of its destiny as a part of the higher harmony.

It is the duty of the nations to-day to search out those who do, think, and utter the best things. When I look into the past, it sometimes seems to me impossible that the nations should have been content with such wretched spiritual harvests. One of the finest signs of the present day is the freedom with which every word is allowed to make its way up from the lowest depths and through the thickest walls. It is no longer, "Many are called, but few are chosen;" but "All are called, and many are chosen."

Ada Negri's spiritual culture of a higher order and her knowledge of the outer world, since poverty, seclusion, and lowliness cut her off from all intercourse, was gained from *newspapers*, which found their way to her remote village. She sent her poems, one by one, to the newspapers. And they printed them. With no help from intermediaries, the child of a poor factory-worker, whose hiding-place was known to none, became known to the whole Italian people. And thus too the sisters Martha and Johanna Ambrosius, who surely owed much to their father's books and the village school up to their eleventh year, had the "Gartenlaube,"<sup>1</sup> which they contrived to see, to thank for their intercourse with

<sup>1</sup> A popular German magazine.

the world. They learned to know the German people through this journal. Johanna's first verses were sent to it. Half nameless, loose leaves did the work which could have been achieved in no other way.

All speak of the power of the press to-day. An invisible and impassioned intercourse between unseen writers and unseen readers goes on untiringly and unendingly.

Newspapers and magazines give us occasional chance reading. No regular instruction is afforded or offered us here. Of one article we read only the beginning, of others the end. We take up the sheet contemptuously and indifferently, and throw it down again. We seldom ask what pen can have written it. Good and bad style are alike to us. But who would give up newspaper reading? It enters into us, and quiets the longing for something which we should not otherwise know. Journals contain the most heedless pictures of daily life. It gathers them up in a wild, unrestrained confusion, and reproduces them. Journals are the natural indispensable food. We read them as a herd browses in a meadow. They turn hither and thither without choosing, munching flowers and grass indiscriminately, as they come. We are always reading newspapers, — at breakfast, at dinner, at supper, in the horse-cars, on the railroad. Wherever there is eating and drinking, we demand a newspaper as refreshment. We carry them about with us; we

have always money and room for them. We do not find fault with their pages when they rouse our anger; we do not thank them when they amuse and interest us, not even when they inspire us. The newspaper takes the place of friendship, intimacy, almost of the family. We even read the advertisements, and for an instant fancy ourselves in the places of those who buy, let, sell, hire, give or wish to take lessons, look for places of all sorts, for houses, servants, maids, husbands, wives, or children, whom they promise to bring up properly, — a vast social intercourse of to-day going on between people who remain unknown each to the other, and in which we ourselves, unknowing and unknown, take part. How could the glorious days at Friedrichsruh ever have become a festival in which the whole German nation simultaneously shared, had it not been for the vigorous work of anonymous newspaper writers, who had but one ambition, — to see and hear as much as possible, and to write it down as rapidly and exactly as possible, — so that it seemed as if every German saw and heard Bismarck! This is the way in which the present age lives her own history. What are Greece and Rome to this, to-day? To be sure, we are still wont to turn over the vast heaps of grain bequeathed to us by antiquity; and since we can make no more bread from them, we think the supply is giving out; we must search with greater eagerness, dig up and range in museums what the earth



consents to yield. But faith in the magic power of those collections has perished, and the time will soon come when we shall ask more earnestly, to what end so much gold is lavished in dishing up these fragments. We demand something new. The newspapers are first to tell us the news; they spread glory and honor abroad. They march in the forefront of our literary movement; and the same paper which we accuse of falsehood to-day, moves us to gratitude and assent to-morrow.

Ada Negri and Johanna Ambrosius have the newspapers chiefly to thank for style and universal insight. If I were asked to state precisely what strikes me most strongly in the poems of the two women, I should not depart from the phrase "the spirit of the present." This is the noblest, the ceaseless lesson of our journals, — to prize the present more highly than the past. As I have already said, I do not know why the past has begun to pale and fade for me, nor could I give any explanation of the word "dissolution" here. The framework of the history of German literature once ingeniously constructed by Gervinus no longer stands firm to me. I no longer see a "romantic school," but individual poets, who appear to me from very different points of view than those hitherto accepted. A certain lack of temporality surrounds them. I ask less what their value once was to their contemporaries, than what

they are worth to me now. Whence comes the strange hatred of the social democrats for history, that of the younger writers of the school of Ibsen for the older literature, that of the Wagnerians for the older music, that of the Secessionists for previous painting? The offerings of the devotees of these new tendencies seem in part childish, in part not even genuine; but the public impulse is a fact. Mankind awaits something. It is not mere curiosity. A desire for fresh intellectual images has gradually taken possession of humanity everywhere. The past shall no longer weigh us down. Bürgers's 'Ah, leave the dead to rest!' is the inscription on the forefront of the palace of the present. If I omit Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Raphael from the great list of the proscribed, it is because an enduring, all-powerful present surrounds their works, apparently renewed in all ages by innate power, like the orbits of the great planets, heedless of our common figures, reckoning only years of light. We are now at the close of a world-embracing intellectual ice period; and it is the sudden melting of the glaciers, the downward rush of unsuspected floods, which alarms but at the same time fills us with enthusiasm. The history of Ada Negri is full of the same breathless violence with which the life of Italy now advances. It is all explosions. The ceaseless roar of this literary cannonade has already become a natural thing in Italy. They feel the need there, wherever

bread is baked, to stand on burning lava. The "Gartenlaube" was a gentler nurse to the two child workers in their village. But to them too it showed the possibility of winning literary fame *in the direct way*. It taught them the intellectual equality of man, brought the breath of the national German movement into their solitude, taught Johanna to have faith in herself, and inspired the poor child with the "ardent hunger for knowledge," which "as a child it expressed in tears." Johanna learned from newspapers and the New Testament the lesson of noble resignation which forms the keynote to her poetry. Although I mention Goethe and Shakespeare here,<sup>1</sup> I would not compare Johanna Ambrosius and Ada Negri to these two; but they are of the same race by intellectual kinship. They are nobly born. Where the true poet speaks, a picture appears before our spiritual eyes; when anything gladdens him, it also gladdens us; when poets grieve, they compel us also to grieve. There is a token by which we may know the genuine poet, — the motto invisibly printed before each of his poems: "From deepest need I cry aloud to thee!" So, too, "God granted" the poor ailing peasantwoman leave "to say what she suffered."

New duties spring to life to-day from the com-

<sup>1</sup> Johanna imitated some of Goethe's verses in a striking and innocent fashion, although this adoption seems only obligatory.

munity of thought and feeling between the races of mankind. When the "Elbe" sinks, when an earthquake destroys cities, when avalanches and mountains descend upon villages, or fire and plague demand their victims, it is the dead of all mankind that are mourned and of whose survivors the world takes charge. No one is to blame for the poor peasant-woman's fate; yet the sick body of the poetess Johanna Ambrosius and her children must be nursed and cared for. It is our first duty to ask what may happen, and then to do something.

## JOHANNA AMBROSIUS.

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**A**BOUT a year ago [says an American journalist] there appeared in "Gartenlaube," a periodical published at Leipsic, Germany, a poem, "The Last Song," signed "Johanna Ambrosius." . . . The name was familiar, but the writer was unknown. The little songs, with nothing of the subtleties of the world in them, but the high and wide simplicity of the eternities, — life, death, sin, and sorrow, the beatitudes, — that had appeared from time to time over the name, had won their way insensibly into the hearts of the readers of "Gartenlaube," had been copied far and wide, and had reached even the Empress in her palace, who taught them to the young princes at her knee. Now, when this "Last Song" rang like a cry from a heart too long tortured to other tortured hearts, there was instant response, almost consternation.

Who was Johanna Ambrosius, and was this indeed her last song? God forbid! . . . One, two, three, four editions of the book appeared in as many months, — the voice crying in the wilderness of city streets and the desolation of forests and mines, but still the one crying, was invisible, silent now, as if the last song had

indeed been sung. With a copy of the book a messenger journeyed with decorations and honors from the Empress to a remote village of East Prussia,—the bleak way taken by Queen Louise in her flight to Tilsit after the battle of Jena, almost to the Russian border.

Over frozen rivers where men fished through the ice, around ice-sheeted lakes, over snow-clad hills and bitter winds from the Baltic, ever within sound of the moaning sea and the sighing firs, the St. Petersburg train rushed on through villages of huddled, half-buried huts, scorning to pause, flinging an occasional bundle of papers to the dwellers in the desolation. The peasants emerged almost from the roofs to watch the train go by, stopping their toil scarcely longer than the peasants of Barbizon drop their tools for the Angelus, to catch a breath from that strange, panting, pulsing engine that stood for progress to the world, for nothing to them but a sense of their helplessness and unique misery.

On and on rushed the train bearing the messenger of the Empress, through the village where Queen Louise wrote on a pane of glass with her diamond ring that verse from Goethe in her extremity, —

“ Who never ate his bread with tears,  
Who never in the solemn hours of night  
Lay sunk in gloomy fears, —  
He knows ye not, ye heavenly powers.”

If eating the bread with tears brings God nearer, then He must indeed be very near the dwellers in the northeast corner of Germany. Nothing but toil and

misery from eternity to eternity. Surely the messenger would find the poetess in one of the feudal castles which at long intervals sat in the midst of vast estates, — a great lady, perhaps, her heart aching with the knowledge of the misery of dependants whom she could not help, — shut in with them in these desolate snow wastes for many months of the year, crying out for her peasant children, from whom all expression must have been crushed generations ago by the hardness of their lives.

At last he left the train and entered a sledge for the bitter drive to Gross-Wersmeninken with a driver who spoke some strange dialect. Farther and farther, almost to the border of Russia, the firs growing thicker and darker, bearing with patience their burden of snow or flinging rebellious arms to the gray sky; torrents frozen on the steeps; stars shining far above, but scarcely a friendly gleam from the miserable dwellings below, shut in to their eaves, held down by the soft heaviness of snow; plodding peasants cumbered with clothes; round wooden churches with tiny belfries in the midst of clustered cabins.

Surely, surely! Not here! But yes, here was Gross-Wersmeninken, more hopeless in its poverty than the other villages, and the snow-buried house of Johanna Ambrosius — Frau Voigt — whom the Empress of Germany would honor.

If a jubilee had rung from the stricken heart of Siberia, the German world could not have been more astonished or profoundly moved than that the spirit

of Goethe should awaken in this corner of Germany, — scarcely Teuton ; Russian, Polish, ancient Lithuanian, almost Laplandish, if you will, the same sun shining on it, indeed, that purples the slopes of the Rhine and gilds the wheat-fields of the Lower Danube, but contracted by the icy blasts from Arctic seas and plains. The same religion consoling, their *feste Burg* is Luther's God ; the language of Luther taught them in the schools, but language and religion reaching them through what layers of habit and superstition, contracted by centuries of privation. The myths and legends of the pines and the sea, the amber witch who gathers the precious mineral of the Baltic, standing knee-deep in frozen spray ; the werewolves of the forest, and swan maidens of the lakes ; the siren of the waterfalls, locked in the torrent half the year, luring them to toil on the slopes, only to see their labor lost in some vicious caprice of the spirit, — all these are nearer and more terrible than the bull of a pope, more potent than a protesting monk.

In the remotest village of this latest-acquired, not yet amalgamated province of Germany, Johanna Ambrosius was born, lived, toiled, suffered incredible hardships and privations, hungered in the body, thirsted in the soul, wept for knowledge unattainable, gained the highest knowledge of all, and almost died before the messenger of the Empress found her.

A woman of forty, but bent and worn to sixty, with scarred, toil-hardened hands that lay idle outside the cover of a poor bed in the snow-darkened cottage.



The fever of pneumonia burned on the thin cheek, and a still high light in the dark eyes. On the bed lay a pencil and some torn scraps of paper — the margins of “Gartenlaube” — the paper got through incredible denials; the Christmas candle and bit of meat, the sacrifice of the last fish taken from the ice-mailed river, the last drop of milk for cheese from the single precious cow, as warmly sheltered as the children that played with pine-tree babies on the bare floor before a fire of fagots from the forest.

The story comes to us through so many mediums as to make the task of telling it wellnigh impossible, — through the letters to Herr Schrattenthal from a sister who cared for the poetess in what was thought to be her last illness; through the messenger of the Empress, who brought a famous physician to one who had been ill all her life and never had the relief of medicine; from a book of travels in East Prussia, Lithuania, and Poland; and through a sketch by Herman Grimm in the “Deutsches Rundschau.”

Not a word does she tell of all these external things herself. She was born, her cradle was rocked by the waterfall by a curious native device of a wheel attached to the rocker, while her mother toiled on the slope carrying soil to the naked rocks. “The fragrant breeze of May” was the gentlest thing she ever knew. While it blew she gathered the fagots against the winter’s cold. She mended her father’s nets in winter, oiled his great boots so that he could stand in the icy water to fish, dug the potatoes, cut the scanty wheat,

gathered pine needles to fill the beds, sheared the sheep, spun and wove, looked forward all the year to the splendid candles of Christmas that dispelled the long night in the snow-buried cottage.

In turn she made a bed for the cow and the small horse that pulled the sledge to market with fish and cheese, she knitted and served, she turned the curds and chopped the wood, laboring in the field and forest. On Sunday she went to the church; the tinkling bell the only sound heard from eternity to eternity, but the moan of the ocean, the murmur of the pines, and the subdued voices of men and animals. The hymns of the Sabbath were long prayers or chants. No song ever rose to heaven that gushed out of the heart of nature. The birds were birds of passage, scarcely stopping long enough to nest, rear a brood, and fly.

Incessant toil, beginning before light and toiling till dawn; studying the few scant books that fed the flame of a desire for knowledge without giving it anything to burn; toiling from early dark till late all through a bitter childhood, and winning hard food, hard rest and shelter. Art and science and literature were untranslated terms; books an unbelievable tale; pictures and statues the strange attributes of Heaven, not anything tangible that one might have and hold; beauty and comfort and leisure abstract qualities that a library of dictionaries could not have defined to her understanding.

All that she understood were snow and ice, the complaining firs burdened with snow, the icy winds, toil,

darkness, patience, the elusive hope of the cascade laughing and mocking in the sun of May, its laughing locked in the embrace of October, "the fragrant breeze of May" wafting a breath of Heaven from the south, and taking its caresses elsewhither.

So on that, the kindest thing she knew, she sent her message. No "Cotter's Saturday Night" to her to whom Burns's picture of Scotch humble life would have been a dream of paradise; no dimpling streams, or scampering mice of the field, or daisy; no banks and braes to bloom so fair, nature as full of care as her heart. Nothing but herself and God, human nature and other nature and the eternities. She knew nothing else; but those who live in palaces knew not so much.

She says when she writes she feels an indescribable exaltation. Hunger and thirst, darkness and cold and pain, afflict her no more. On those torn, soiled scraps of paper come couplets as exquisitely cut as a cameo. In writing she found the liberty, freedom, light, denied her elsewhere. She went out to service in the fields as a girl. She returned and married a playmate, voluntarily taking up a life of toil like that of her mother. No more can be wrested from that land than shelter, potatoes, and bread. Her children were born to be rocked by the waterfall as she had been.

At forty years of age she had one more sorrow. She feared she could not live to care for her children. There is no physician in those desolate wastes. From her sick-bed she sent her last song to "caress the

world as it wings its way." Cheer for the cheerless, comfort for the dying, courage for the coward, forgiveness for sin, pity for sorrow, peace for strife. This brave song out of a heart faint with denial and longing only for a forgotten grave under snow-burdened pines !

All the beatitudes, — oh, ye who have so much more and have not these !

She could tell nothing more than these bare facts to the Empress, who sent from a palace to learn the secret of a lofty spiritual life. When she wrote, she was so moved, so transported out of herself and the world, that her tired body seemed that of a stranger and her spirit free. The same sensation comes to one in reading her poems. They have no environment. They are true of the disembodied. In this ethereal space the poetess makes us conscious only of existence, not of time or space or circumstance. The power to transform intolerable misery into freedom belongs only to the greatest poets and religious teachers. They alone succeed in detaching themselves from externals, and become oblivious of garments and creeds and creature comforts.

Her very ignorance of the science and art and literature and accumulated wisdom of the world invests her work with fundamental truth, — truth without tradition becoming universal, fresh from the hand of God ; no more, no less, now than at any time, no more in any future day ; because we make small change of it and circulate it freely, makes it no more in the aggregate, only the more widely diffused and recognized.

Science and art do that for us. Now and then we get the same old coins from a new mint, and they seem like a revelation and are hoarded. And we know we are getting the same treasures back, having searched for them and found them infinitely subdivided, tarnished, worn with irreverent use, embellished with all the discoveries, speculations, and achievements of mankind.

Just because she was so poor, so obscure, so lowly, so shut away from records and philosophy, the fundamental facts of spiritual experience were revealed to Johanna Ambrosius. Her verse has in it the invisible life of Germany, and rings like those old folk songs, religious hymns, and lullabies that form so large a part of German literature, — the *minne* song and the *meister* song find an echo. Her life is a counterpart of life in the days when women took "courage like a flame" to warrior husbands, — their praises sweet, their blame. This is the secret of the astonishing power of her poetry. Such inconceivable toil and woe were hers that, in relieving her own sorrows, she must perforce relieve others groaning under intolerable burdens of whatever nature.

She writes of simple things, — the death of a child, its toys laid in the coffin; every infrequent flower, in those Northern meadows briefly bright; every bird note, longed for ten months of the year; every nursing of the snow, winter greens and berries, and expanding cone of the pine. Wherever a flower grew was holy ground, every flower sacred, — nothing more